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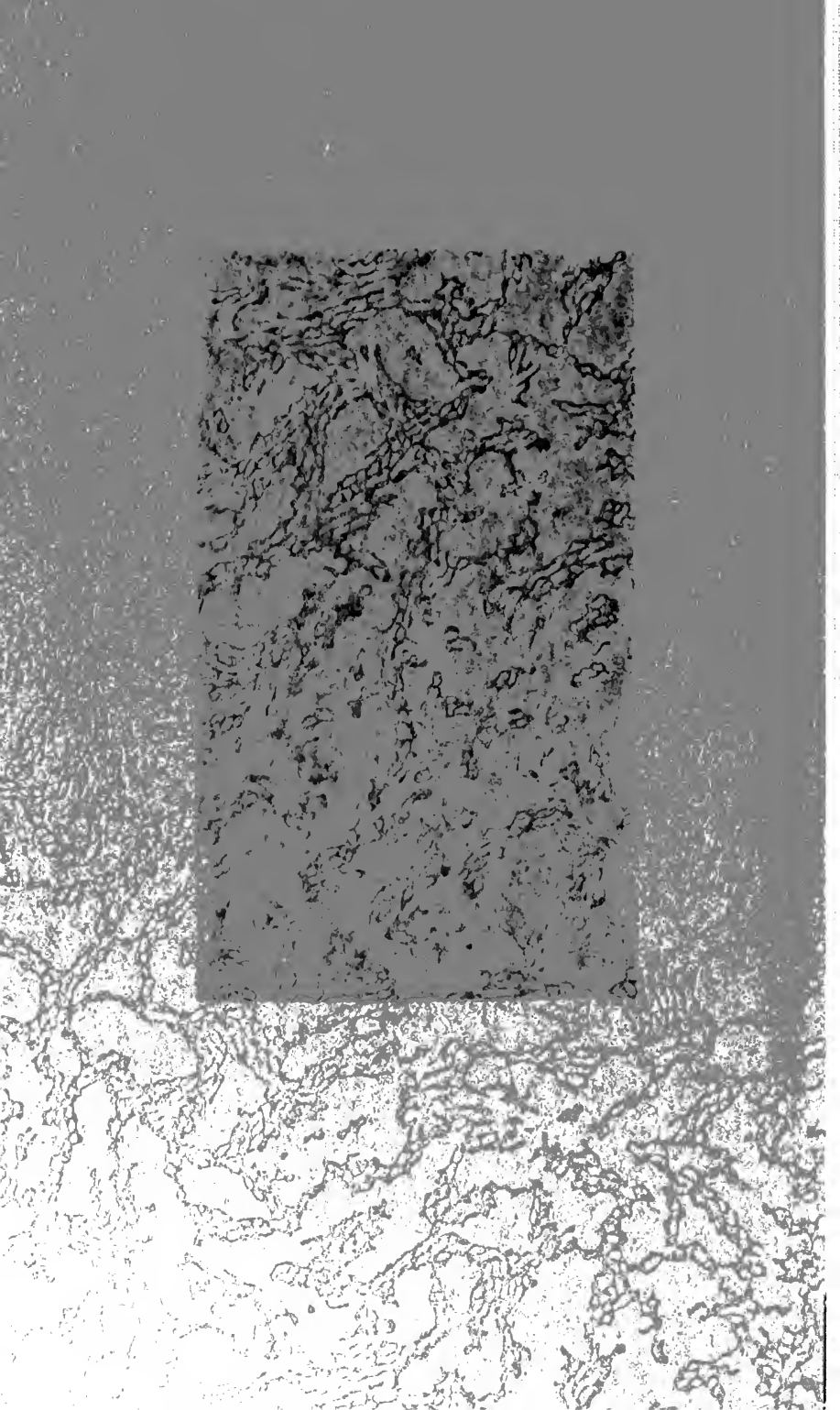
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IF I WERE KING

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IF I WERE KING

A ROMANTIC PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

JUSTIN HUNTLY McCARTHY



NEW YORK

SAMUEL FRENCH

Publisher

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IF I WERE KING

A Romantic Play in Four Acts

ADAPTED BY

JUSTIN HUNTLY McCARTHY

FROM HIS STORY OF THE SAME NAME

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IF I WERE KING

Produced on August 30th, 1902, at the St. James's Theatre,
London, with the following cast of Characters:—

FRANÇOIS VILLON	<i>George Alexander.</i>
LOUIS XI	<i>Charles Fulton.</i>
TRISTAN L'HERMITE	<i>Alfred Brydone.</i>
OLIVIER LE DAIN	<i>E. Vivian Reynolds.</i>
THIBAUT D'AUSSIGNY	<i>E. Lyall Swete.</i>
NOEL LE JOLYS	<i>Henry Ainley.</i>
RENÉ DE MONTIGNY	<i>Herbert Dansey.</i>
GUY TABARIE	<i>W. R. Staveley.</i>
COLIN DE CAYEULX	<i>H. Carter Bligh.</i>
JEHAN LE LOUP	<i>Arthur Machen.</i>
CASIN CHOLET	<i>G. A. Seager.</i>
ROBIN TURGIS	<i>Richard Dalton.</i>
TROIS ECHELLES	<i>Percy Jackson.</i>
PETIT JEAN	<i>Charles Lindley.</i>
TOISON D'OR, the Burgundian Herald	<i>Ernest Griffin.</i>
MONTJOYE, the French Herald	<i>H. R. Hignett.</i>
AN ASTROLOGER	<i>B. Fairclough.</i>
CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH	<i>F. Henderson.</i>
KATHERINE DE VAUCELLES	<i>Julie Opp.</i>
MOTHER VILLON	<i>Bessie Page.</i>
HUGUETTE DU HAMEL	<i>Suzanne Sheldon.</i>
JEHANNETON LE BELLE HEAULMIÈRE	<i>Auriol Lee.</i>
BLANCHE	<i>May Saker.</i>
GUILLEMETTE	<i>Dorothy Scott.</i>
ISABEAU	<i>Jean Mackinlay.</i>
DENISE	<i>Beatrice Beckley.</i>
THE QUEEN	<i>Margaret Caskie.</i>

ACT I.

THE TAVERN.

Night.

ACT II.

THE GARDEN.

Noon.

ACT III.

THE MASQUE.

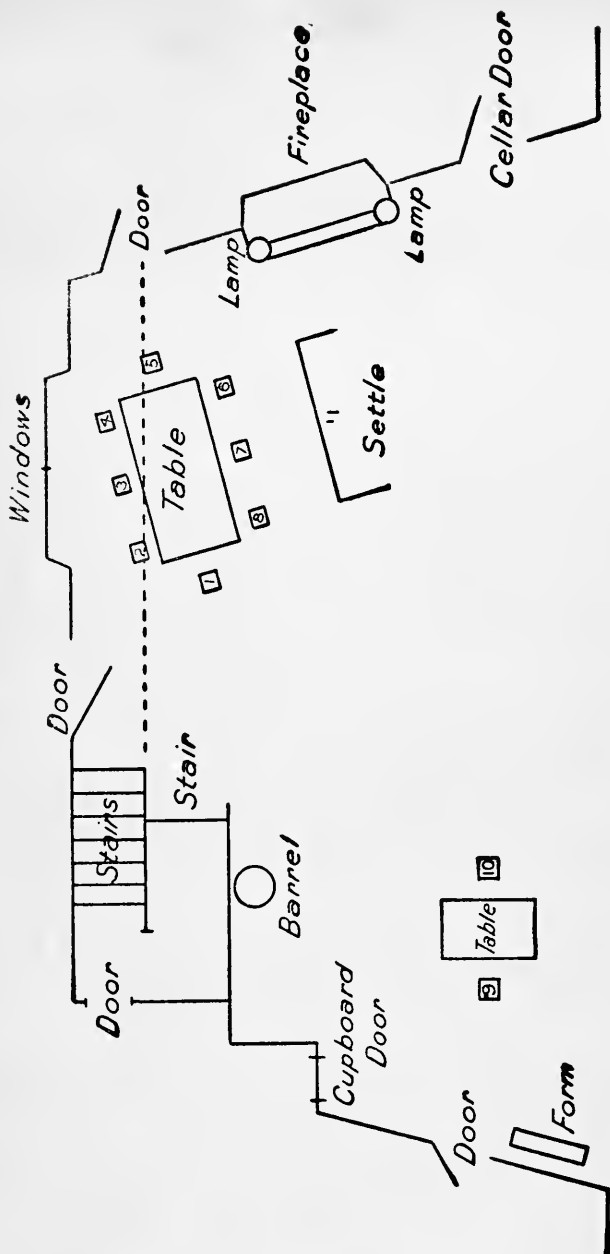
Evening.

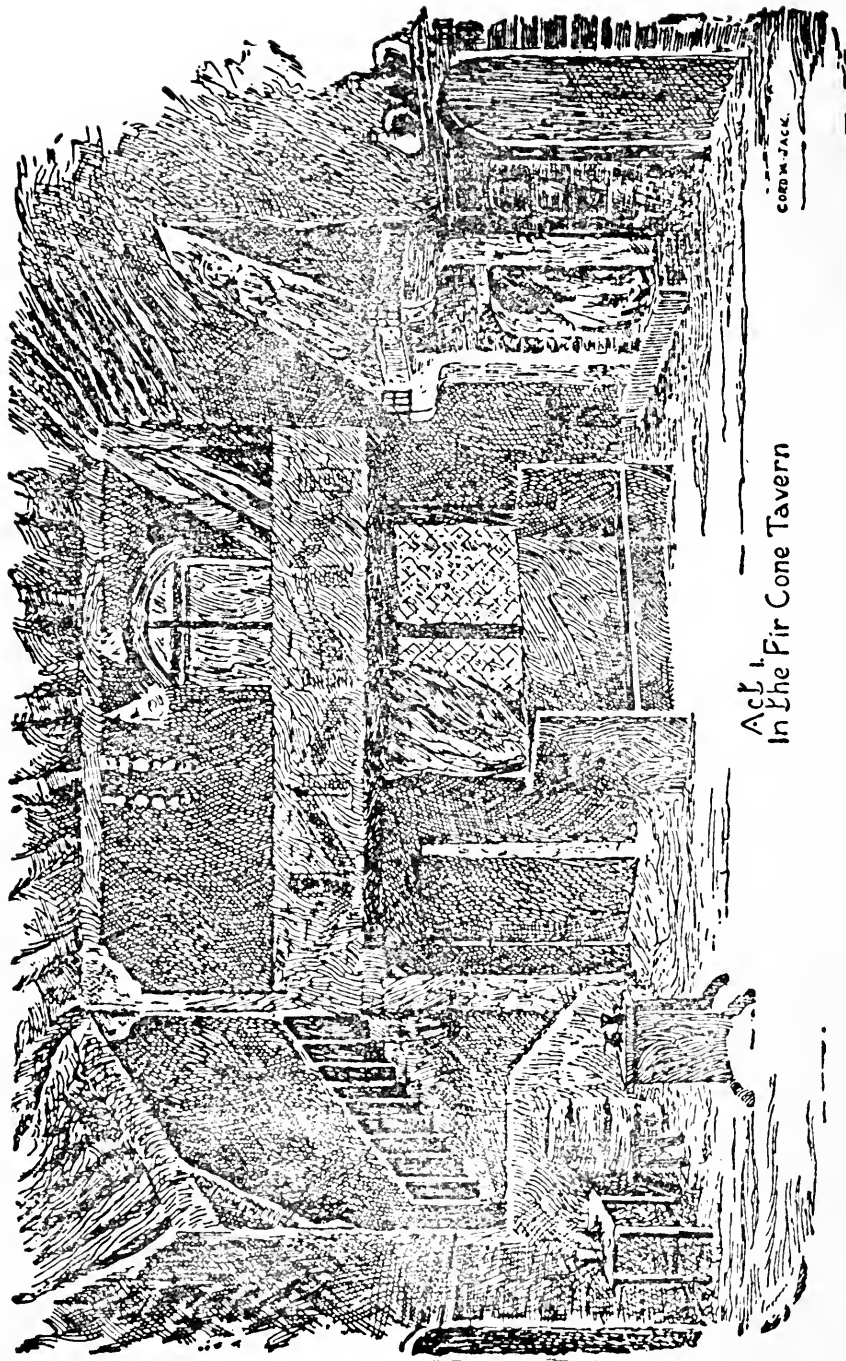
ACT IV.

THE GIBBET.

Morning.

ACT I.





Act I.
In the Fir Cone Tavern

CORD M. JACK.

ACT I.

The scene is the interior of the tavern of the Fir Cone, a large rafted room that looks snug and comfortable in a somewhat sordid way. A wooden gallery rising from a stair up R. runs along the back wall, ending in a door to L. Door at turn of stair R.U.E. The main door of the inn is centre, with small recessed window on left side, curtained with brown curtains. At right down stage is small table with two stools. Door R.I.E. At left down stage a fireplace with a large high-backed settle in front of it. At L.U.E. is the entrance to ROBIN'S quarters, visible over a half-door. Barrels of wine, flagons, pipkins, and all the appurtenances of a tavern of the time. Cellar door L.I.E. At L. up stage is a table with stools around it.

When the curtain rises a group of gaily-dressed women and ruffianly men are clustered around the table L.U.E. drinking and dicing. The men are RENÉ DE MONTIGNY sitting on stool 7, GUY TABARIE standing on the R. of stool 1, COLIN DE CAYEULX standing at the L. end of the settle, JEHAN LE LOUP sitting on stool 4 and CASIN CHOLET asleep on settle 11. The women are HUGUETTE DU HAMEL sitting on the table, JEHANNETON LA BELLE HEAULMIÈRE sitting on stool 6, BLANCHE sitting on stool 3, GUILLEMETTE sitting on stool 5, ISABEAU sitting on stool 8, and DENISE sitting on stool 1. HUGUETTE is dressed as a man. She is sitting on the table reciting : laughter before and during rise of curtain. ROBIN TURGIS, the landlord, shutting R. door, goes down to R. table to straighten up R.S.

HUGUETTE. Daughters of Pleasure, one and all,
 (To DENISE). Of form and features delicate,
 (To ISABEAU). Of bodies slim and bosoms small,
 With feet and fingers white and straight;
 Your eyes are bright, your grace is great
 To hold your lovers' hearts in thrall;
 Use your red lips before too late,
 Love ere love flies beyond recall.

(Throws kiss to ROBIN, who is down R.C. and picks up cards.)

ALL. Ah !

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY *(sitting at table)*. Devilish good advice, dollies !

(During the following ROBIN takes two mugs off table and goes up R.C., and has business at cupboard.)

HUGUETTE (*commences reciting again*).

(To ISABEAU). For soon the golden hair is grey,

(*Some say "Oh" quietly.*)

And all the body's lovely line
In wrinkled meanness slipped astray ;
(To GUILLEMETTE). Your limbs (*smacking GUILLEMETTE'S
shoulder, who is about to drink. She puts down cup after the
smack*) so round and ripe and fine
Shrivelled and withered ; quenched the shine
That made your eyes as bright as day ;
So, ladies, hear these words of mine,
Love ere love flutters far away.

ALL. Oh !

DENISE (*head on HUGUETTE'S knee*). Enné. What a sad song, Abbess ! (GUY TABARIE gives her his mug of drink.)

HUGUETTE. Master François Villon made it for me t'other day when I was teasing him. "You will grow old, Idol," he said, and he made that song for me. And I tell it to you to teach you true things.

GUY TABARIE (*rising*). Kiss me and forget it.

(Clutches at her and takes HUGUETTE'S hands : she throws him off to DENISE, who catches him and sits him at table.)

HUGUETTE (*jumping off table*). I have no kisses for any Jack of you all but François. (*All laugh.*)

COLIN DE CAYEULX (*standing by table*). Well done, Virtue !

JEHAN DE LOUP (*rising on to stool*). Hail, Nonpareil !

HUGUETTE (*going up towards table and sitting*). There's no one of you can make songs like him (ISABEAU ridicules HUGUETTE) or make one sad as he can in the midst of gladness.

JEHAN LE LOUP (*still on stool*). A mad reason for loving a man that he makes you sad.

COLIN DE CAYEULX (*pulling JEHAN LE LOUP off stool and standing in his place*). Is this a Court of Love ? We're here for drinking. There are other rooms for love-making.

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. Where is our good François ?

HUGUETTE. I have not seen him these two days !

GUY TABARIE (*rising from stool comes down stage and hands pitcher to ROBIN, the landlord, who is up R.C. and who comes to take it.*) Well, the place is quieter without him. He makes more noise than the Burgundians. The pitcher's empty. Wine, Bluffer ! (*All shout "Wine," "Red Wine," "White Wine."* ROBIN gets wine from up R.C. barrel. BLANCHE gets cards from table and plays at window-seat with JEHAN LE LOUP.)

(GUY TABARIE *returns to the table. All movement but no noise. The door c. opens softly and TRISTAN L'HERMITE comes down stage. TRISTAN looks curiously round, then he returns to outside door and speaks.*)

TRISTAN. Come in, messire.

(LOUIS XI *enters. TRISTAN shuts door after entrance and comes down L. of LOUIS. Both are very quietly dressed like decent burghesses of the poorer kind, in dark colours. ROBIN goes to L. with wine for GUY TABARIE after entrance. GUY TABARIE pours out wine for all. Both the new-comers conceal their faces as much as possible.*)

LOUIS (R.C.). Is this the eyrie?

TRISTAN (C.). This is the Fir Cone tavern.

(LOUIS *sits at table down stage R. on the L. side of it. TRISTAN goes behind table to R. of it after LOUIS sits.*)

LOUIS (*sitting*). I suppose we must take something for the good of the house, gossip Tristan.

TRISTAN (*standing up*). Indispensable, messire—here comes the host.

LOUIS. I will board him. Master Taverner, you see here two decent cits who have turned a penny or twain in a bargain, and would drown it if you have something to drink that is good alike for purse and palate.

ROBIN (C.). We have a white wine of Beaune, sir, which is noble drinking.

TRISTAN. Bring it.

(ROBIN *retires up R.C. to cupboard.*)

LOUIS. You are free with other men's pennies, friend.

TRISTAN. I wear out my hands and feet in your service, but I wish to save my throat and stomach.

(LOUIS *grunts and fumbles in his purse. ROBIN brings wine from cupboard and puts it on the table.*)

LOUIS (*paying*). Thank you, friend. (ROBIN *comes round L. of LOUIS murmuring.*) Well?

TRISTAN. Give him a penny for himself.

LOUIS (*reluctantly*). Oh! (*Does so.*) (ROBIN *retires up C. and shows coin to crowd. They laugh. Then goes to cupboard R. LOUIS drinks.*) This is seeing life, friend Tristan.

TRISTAN. Let's hope it mayn't be seeing death, friend Louis. There are a couple of rogues in that covey who would spit you or split you or slit you for the price of a drink.

LOUIS. Gossip Tristan, there is at my Court a scholar who told me an Eastern tale. (GUY TABARIE *rises and bus. of telling story*

at table. BLANCHE and JEHAN DE LOUP come from window to hear story. BLANCHE sits c., corner of table. JEHAN DE LOUP stands back of table.)

TRISTAN. Pray God it be a gay one such as your Majesty loves!

LOUIS. (*Quickly.*) Hush, man! No "Majesty" here. 'Tis of an Eastern king—one Haroun, surnamed, as I shall be surnamed, "The Just." (*Snort from TRISTAN.*) It was his pastime to go about Bagdad of nights in disguise, and mingling with his people, thus learn much to the welfare of the realm. I am following his example, and I expect to learn much. (*Exit ROBIN to cellar, crossing from R. up stage with jug.*)

TRISTAN (*gruffly*). You are likely to learn how unpopular you are.

LOUIS. You are always a bird of evil omen. Be bright, man! Look at me. The Burgundian leaguer is at my gates; my throne sways like a rocking chair, yet I don't pull a sad face. The stars promise succour, and I dreamed a dream last night that filled my heart with lightness.

TRISTAN. Dreams and stars! Stars and dreams!

LOUIS. I dreamed that I was a swine rooting in the streets of Paris, and that I found a pearl of great price in the gutter. I took it and placed it in my crown, where it shone so brightly that it filled all Paris with its light.

TRISTAN. A pig with a crown! A tavern sign!

LOUIS. But it made my crown so heavy for my brow that I plucked the pearl from its place and flung it to the ground, and would have trod on it, when a star fell from Heaven and stayed me, and I awoke trembling.

(*GUY TABARIE comes to the end of his story. Laugh at table from all.*)

TRISTAN. Leave dreams to weaklings, sire.

LOUIS. Don't preach but instruct. Who are these people?

TRISTAN. Some of the worst cats and rats in all Paris. The men belong to a fellowship that is called the Company of the Cockle-shells, and babble a cant of their own that baffles the thief-takers. (*During this sentence ISABEAU upsets HUGUETTE's cards. HUGUETTE rises, gets away from table to c. and threatens ISABEAU. RENÉ DE MONTIGNY rises and intercedes. GUY TABARIE beckons her to return.*) The women are trulls. Yonder she-thing in the man's habit is Huguette du Hamel, whom they call the Abbess for her nunnery of light o' loves. (*JEHANNETON rises, sees CASIN CHOLET asleep, tells RENÉ DE MONTIGNY, who pours wine over him from back of settle.*)

LOUIS. She shall be reprov'd hereafter.

(*JEHANNETON disturbs CASIN CHOLET at L. end of settle.*)

TRISTAN. Yonder fellow in the purple jerkin is René de Montigny, of gentle birth and a great breaker of commandments. (*Movement from CASIN CHOLET.*) But it would waste my breath and your

patience to tell them all over. Bullies, wantons, thieves, murderers—to enumerate their offences is to say the Decalogue backwards.

LOUIS. You have a pithy humour, Tristan. Our gallows shall be busy anon.

TRISTAN (*rising and looking at L. table*). I miss one rogue from the gallery, a fellow named François Villon, who is easily their leader. The strangest knave in all Paris—scholar, poet, drinker, drabber, blabber, good at pen, point, and pitcher. In the Court of Miracles they call him the King of the Cockleshells.

(*The voice of FRANÇOIS VILLON is heard singing outside c. ROBIN returns.*)

VILLON (*outside, sings*). Since I have left the prison gate—
(JEHAN LE LOUP, BLANCHE, COLIN DE CAYEULX *look out of window*.)

HUGUETTE (*rises*). (*Springing up and to c., down a little.*) It is the voice of François.

(ISABEAU *comes round to settle and wakes up CASIN CHOLET. They both stand L.C. waiting for VILLON'S entrance.*)

VILLON. Where I came near to say good-bye—

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. His own unutterable pipe!

VILLON. To this poor life that needs must fly—

ALL (*rising*). François! François!

(HUGUETTE *rushes to door and GUY TABARIE pulls her away.*)

VILLON. From the malignity of Fate—

(HUGUETTE and GUY TABARIE *get R.C. before VILLON enters. RENÉ DE MONTIGNY and ISABEAU come to L. of him.*)

ROBIN. Here is the devil out of hell again (*sits on settle L.C. after taking keys out of door*).

VILLON. Perchance she now will pass me by—

TRISTAN. (*sitting*). The very Villon I spoke of.

VILLON. Since I have left the prison gate.

(*With last line of song the door c. is flung open and FRANÇOIS VILLON stands framed in the opening. He is picturesquely ragged, in patched and faded finery of many colours; his tattered cloak is tilted by a sword; in his belt is thrust a small parchment; a cock's feather is stuck in his cap. He has a small beard, and his hair is long and unkempt. At entrance all shout "François." RENÉ DE MONTIGNY shuts the door after his entrance. HUGUETTE is on his R.*)

VILLON. Well, hearts of gold! How are ye? Did ye miss me, lads (*to GUY TABARIE, taking hand*); did ye miss me, lasses? (ISABEAU *embraces him.*)

HUGUETTE (*pushing ISABEAU away*). Surely I missed you, François. (*She throws her arms about him.*)

(CASIN CHOLET *soothes ISABEAU and takes her up R.C.*)

VILLON. Very well, very well! (*Extricates himself gently from her arms; moving to L.*) Give me a wash of wine, for my throat's parched with piping. (*Getting down L. a little. The crowd go up for wine.*)

GUY TABARIE (*offering cup from R.C.*). Drink of my cup, François.

COLIN DE CAYEULX (*coming L.C.*). Of mine.

VILLON (*putting them aside*). Nay, I will have my own. Have we no landlord here? Master Robin, come hither! (*ROBIN comes forward L.C. VILLON down C.*) Why do you not salute gentry when they honour your pothouse? (*Knocking ROBIN's cap off to crowd at back who play with it.*) A mug of your best Beaune, Master Beggar-maker, to drink damnation to the Burgundians.

(*Turns to HUGUETTE, who is on his R., and embraces her.*)

ROBIN (*L.C.*). What colour has money nowadays, Master François?

VILLON (*turning quickly. Clapping hand to dagger and murmuring* "What colour has money?" *HUGUETTE stops VILLON's action.*) The colour of blood sometimes.

(*CASIN CHOLET sits on settle.*)

ROBIN. None of your swaggering, Master François. We have a new king, and there should be a new king's name on the coinage. Show me a Louis XI and I will show you my Beaune wine. (*VILLON repeats "Show you a Louis XI" and makes for ROBIN but is stopped by HUGUETTE.*)

LOUIS. Let me do so much for you, sir! (*To VILLON, who bows and stares at him in surprise. Long pause during bowing.*) Will you honour me by drinking at my expense?

(*HUGUETTE runs and sits on arm of settle.*)

VILLON (*crossing to KING*). You are a civil stranger and I will so far honour you. I left my purse under my pillow this morning (*Laughter of VILLON's friends. VILLON repeats "Under my pillow."*) and this ungentle fellow denies me credit. How rarely we meet with an ale-draper who is also a gentleman!

LOUIS. My host, a flagon of your best!

(*ROBIN advances. LOUIS tenders coin, which VILLON intercepts and VILLON takes coin: ROBIN goes back to C. disgusted.*)

VILLON. Allow me; and is this the new king's counter? (*Surveying coin.*) Well, God bless his Majesty, say I, for I owe him my present liberty. There was a gaol clearing when he came to Paris, and as I happened to be in gaol at the time—through an error of the law—(*Laughter from VILLON's friends. VILLON repeats "Through an error of the law"*)—they were good enough to kick me out into the free air. (*HUGUETTE gets off settle and goes to JEHAN LE LOUP sitting on stool by table.*) Will you add to your kindness, old gentleman, by

allowing me to keep this token of our dear monarch in memory of the event?

(*Moves up to table, showing coin to others and putting it in pouch.*)

LOUIS (*with a wry face*). By all means!

(*Beckons to host, who crosses to LOUIS as VILLON goes up with coin to table. The crowd are all interested in it. GUY TABARIE and HUGUETTE are R. of VILLON and watch him put it in pouch. LOUIS gives ROBIN another coin, who then moves up to cupboard R.C.*)

TRISTAN (*grimly to himself*). Master Villon, you'll be sorry for this!

VILLON (*crossing to LOUIS and on his way meeting ROBIN with wine which he has got from cupboard*). You are a very obliging old gentleman.

LOUIS. You harp on my age, sir. You are yourself no chicken.

HUGUETTE (*coming down L. from up C.*). What's his age to you, Sober-sides?

CASIN CHOLET (*rushing from L.C. and drawing sword*). Lend the cit a clip of the ear.

VILLON (*turning to others, bottle and cup in hand*). Patience, damsels, patience, good comrades of the Cockleshell. If our friend is inquisitive, at least he has paid his fee. (*VILLON stops rush from L. ROBIN who is now R.C. stops RENÉ DE MONTIGNY, BLANCHE, ISABEAU, JEHAN LE LOUP and DENISE, who rush toward LOUIS with menace. They get back to old positions. Draping cloak around him, VILLON drinks and gives bottle to HUGUETTE. Gives mug to BLANCHE. HUGUETTE takes bottle and fills CASIN CHOLET's cup.*) For three and thirty years I have taken toll of life, with such result as you see. A light pocket is a plague, but a light heart and a light love make amends for much.

(*Turns to HUGUETTE and embraces her.*)

LOUIS. You are a philosopher!

HUGUETTE (*hugging him*). You are a little angel!

VILLON (*releasing himself and moving her over to his R.*). Gently, Abbess, gently! (*Crossing to C.*) My shoulders tingle and my sides ache too sorely for claspings.

(*Moves down to L. a little. ROBIN sits R. on form.*)

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY (*from up L.C.*). What ails you?

VILLON (*walking up stage*). You behold me, friends, a victim of love. (*All laugh.*)

HUGUETTE (*advancing on him L.C.*). What do you say? (*Business with bottle as if going to strike him. Action stopped by GUY TABARIE.*)

VILLON (*waving her down*). Hush, hush, my girl! there are many kinds of love, as you ought to know well enough. I am a rogue and

a vagabond, and so sometimes I love you (*throwing kiss to HUGUETTE*) and other such Athanasian wenches, Isabeau there (*pointing to her on table*) and Jehanneton (*kissing her : she is sitting on stool by settle*).

HUGUETTE (*moving towards them*). You minxes, do you make eyes at my man ?

(*Business with bottle. HUGUETTE makes for JEHANNETON from down R.C. VILLON intercepts and turns her away to L. HUGUETTE gives jug to CASIN CHOLET, who goes up L., drinking out of it. HUGUETTE comes L.C.*)

VILLON. But also I am, Heaven forgive me ! a jingler of rhymes, with the stars for my candles and the roses for my toys, and we singers of songs sometimes love in another fashion. And so it chanced to me for my sins and to my sorrow.

HUGUETTE (L.C.). Cry baby.

JEHANNETON (*approaching C. from seat*). Tell us what has happened.

(HUGUETTE draws her away from VILLON to L. JEHANNETON has mug in her hand. BLANCHE, GUY TABARIE and JEHAN DE LOUP move towards VILLON approvingly.)

LOUIS. May I support the lady's prayer ?—unless a stranger's presence distresses you.

VILLON (*to LOUIS, C., back to audience*). Lord love you, no ! I have long since forgotten reticence, and will talk of my empty purse, my empty belly, and my empty heart to any man. Gather round me, cullions and cutpurses, and listen to the strange adventure of Master François Villon, clerk, of Paris.

(VILLON seats himself on an empty barrel, which GUY TABARIE rolls across for him, with his legs crossed and holding his sword across his knee. His friends group around him. DENISE brings down jug to HUGUETTE. GUILLEMETTE brings stool which HUGUETTE takes away. CASIN CHOLET brings GUILLEMETTE a stool. DENISE brings stool for JEHAN DE LOUP. ISABEAU brings mug to R.C. and RENÉ DE MONTIGNY brings stool for her and sets it at head of table R. BLANCHE brings stool for herself. JEHANNETON has mug and sits on floor C. RENÉ DE MONTIGNY brings stool forward and stands R. of VILLON, ISABEAU on stool. JEHANNETON lies on the floor, rests her face on her hands and looks up at VILLON.)

LOUIS (*speaking behind his hand*). A diverting fellow !

TRISTAN. A dull ape !

(*The positions of the characters are :—*

TRISTAN seated R. of table R.

ISABEAU seated head of table R.

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY standing behind ISABEAU.

LOUIS *seated L. of table B.*

VILLON *seated on barrel C., slightly R.O.*

HUGUETTE *seated on stool on VILLON'S left.*

GUY TABARIE *with jug standing behind HUGUETTE.*

JEHAN LE LOUP *seated on stool left of HUGUETTE.*

DENISE *sitting on his knee.*

COLIN *standing on their left.*

BLANCHE *seated on stool on left of them but further down stage.*

GUILLEMETTE *further left and still further down stage.*

CASIN CHOLET *sitting on floor in front of GUILLEMETTE.*

JEHANNETON *as indicated above.*

ROBIN *up L.C. by table.)*

VILLON (*tossing hat on R. table*). You must know, dear devils and ever-beautiful blowens (*to HUGUETTE*), that three days ago, when I was lying in the kennel, which is my humour, and staring at the sky, which is my recreation (*look from LOUIS. To LOUIS.*)—I speak, sir, but in parable or allegory, a dear device with the schoolmen—I saw between me and heaven the face of a lady, the loveliest face I ever saw.

HUGUETTE. You are a faithless pig!

(*Sniffing. ISABEAU laughs at HUGUETTE.*)

(*During following ROBIN comes round from up L.C. and sits on settle.*)

VILLON (*unheeding her*). She was going to church—God shield her!—but she looked my way as she passed, and though she saw me no more than she saw the cobble-stone I stood on, I saw her once and for ever. We song-chandlers babble a deal of love, but for the most part we know little or nothing about it, and when it comes it knocks us silly. (GUY TABARIE *jerks VILLON from back.*) I was knocked so silly that—(*long pause*)—well, what do you think was the silly thing I did? (*To JEHANNETON*).

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. Emptied a can for oblivion?

BLANCHE. Kissed a wench for the same purpose. The times that I've been wooed out of my name.

CASIN CHOLET. Picked the woman's pocket?

JEHAN LE LOUP. Got near her in the crowd and pinched her?

VILLON. La, la, la! Sillier than all these. I followed her into the church.

ALL. Oh!

COLIN DE CAYEULX. Whew! (*Whistling.*)

LOUIS (*crossing himself repeatedly under his gown*). You are not a church-goer, sir?

VILLON. No, old queernabs, unless there's a pretty girl to follow. (*HUGUETTE snaps fingers at VILLON.*)

GUY TABARIE (*mock seriousness*). Fie, fie! you'll shock this smug citizen.

VILLON. Nonsense! This good cuffin (*leaning forward and slapping*

LOUIS *on the back*) has a friendly face (*smack*) and can take a joke (*smack*). Can't you, old rabbit? (*Kicking him with foot.*)

LOUIS. I thank Heaven I have a sense of humour.

VILLON. Well, I sprawled there in the dark, with my knees on the cold ground, and all the while the sound of her beauty was sweet in my ears, and the taste of her beauty was salt on my lips, and the pain of beauty was gnawing at my heart, and I prayed that I might see her again. (*HUGUETTE catches up a jug to throw at VILLON, but is dexterously disarmed by COLIN LE CAYEULX, who takes jug away and drinks.*) And the incense tickled my nostrils and the painted saints sneered at me, and bits of rhymes and bits of prayers jiggled in my brain, and I felt as if I were drunk with some new and delectable liquor—and then she slipped out (*pause*) and I after her (*pause*). She took the holy water from my fingers (*quietly*).

HUGUETTE. I wish it had burned you to the bone (*pause*).

VILLON. It burned deeper than that, believe me. Outside, on God's steps, stood a yellow-haired, pink-faced puppet, who greeted her, and they ambled away together, I on their heels. (*All get more interested.*) Presently they came to a gateway and in slips my quarry, and as she did so she turned to her squire and I saw her face again, and lost it, for the tears came in my eyes. (*LOUIS turns round to face VILLON.*) I suppose you wonder, sir, (*to LOUIS*) why I talk like this? but when my heart's in my mouth, I must spit it out or it chokes me. (*ISABEAU gives VILLON cup. VILLON keeps this cup.*)

LOUIS. I have learned to wonder at nothing.

VILLON. I saluted the gallant and begged to know the lady's name. He took me for a madman, but he told me——

HUGUETTE (*rising L. of him, coaxingly*). What was the name, dear François?

VILLON (*turning to her*). Be secret, sweet; it was Her Majesty the Queen!

(*VILLON's friends laugh; COLIN DE CAYEULX goes up to table HUGUETTE sits again.*)

LOUIS. Fellow!

(*LOUIS rises, goes down stage two steps and turns on VILLON. TRISTAN's heavy hand drops on his shoulder and forces him into his seat again.*)

VILLON (*turning to LOUIS*). Now, now, my rum duke, your loyalty need not take fire. It was not her Majesty, but her name—(*some say "Well?" VILLON repeats "her name"*) I shall keep to myself, though it is written on my shoulders in fair large blue and black bruises.

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY (R.C.). Did the popinjay beat you?

VILLON (*turning to RENÉ DE MONTIGNY*). No, no; it came about

thus. We tinkers of verses set a price on our wares that few find them worth, yet with the love fever in my veins I wrote rhymes to this lady, and sent them to her fairly writ on a piece of parchment that cost me a dinner.

LOUIS. Did you think she would come to your whistle, like a bird to a lure?

VILLON. In this kind of madness a minstrel thinks himself a new Orpheus who could win a woman out of hell with his music. But I got an answer— ("Well?" *from some.*) Oh, I got my answer!

(Becomes silent and moody for a moment; RENÉ DE MONTIGNY claps him on the back.)

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. What was the answer?

VILLON *(laughing)*. A fellow like a page boarded me here three days ago, asked me if I had sent certain verses to a certain quarter; if so, I was to follow him at once. I followed like a sheep, with my heart drumming, till we came to a quiet place, and there four boobies with yard-long *(stretching out hands and knocking GUY TABARIE'S face)* cudgels fell upon me. ("Oh!" *from some.*) I had no weapon but my jack dagger, so I took to my heels. But I have been rarely drubbed and roundly basted, and my poor back and sides are most womanishly tender. *(Slight turn from BLANCHE and GUILLEMETTE, as if disappointed.)*

HUGUETTE. Will it teach you not to play the fool again?

VILLON. It will teach me not to play the fool again, Abbess. The mark of the beast is upon me, and I shall dream no more dreams. *(VILLON drinks from the jug, has cup in his hand.)* I'm thirsty again. More liquor. *(ROBIN rises and sits when he sees that VILLON has drink.)*

(GUY TABARIE fills VILLON'S cup. JEHANNETON, GUILLEMETTE, BLANCHE, DENISE, CASIN CHOLET start rising. HUGUETTE and ISABEAU remain. VILLON drinks. GUY TABARIE fills again. VILLON about to drink when LOUIS stops him. GUY TABARIE drinks out of jug.)

LOUIS. You drink more than is good for your health, sir.

VILLON. Mind your own business! *(VILLON whose R. hand is held by LOUIS gets jug from GUY TABARIE and drinks: gives it back to GUY TABARIE. VILLON'S friends laugh.)* What can a man do but drink when France is going to the devil, when the Burgundians are camped in the free fields where I played in childhood, and a nincompoop sits on the throne, and lets them besiege his city?

(ROBIN goes to sleep.)

TRISTAN *(to himself)*. You'll be sorry you spoke?

LOUIS. No doubt *you* could do better than the king if *you* were in his place.

VILLON *(laughing)*. If I could not do better than Louis Do-

Nothing Louis Dare-Nothing, having his occasions and advantages, may Huguette there never kiss me again—

HUGUETTE (*rises and moves to L., giving stool to GUILLEMETTE, who takes it to table*). Perhaps she never will !

(CASIN CHOLET takes GUILLEMETTE's stool. JEHANNETON takes BLANCHE's stool and puts it by settle. RENÉ DE MONTIGNY takes ISABEAU's stool up to table. ISABEAU gives GUY TABARIE VILLON's hat.)

ISABEAU (*sidling up to LOUIS*). Our François has made a rhyme of it, sir, how he would carry himself if he wore the king's shoes.

LOUIS. A rhyme, say you ? Has he indeed, pretty minion ? (*Takes ISABEAU on his knee.*) May we not hear it, master poet ?

(*All stop attentive and then gather about.*)

VILLON (*taking hat from GUY TABARIE. GUY TABARIE turns to bench R. and gets his jug*). You may ; you shall ; for, 'tis a true song, though it would cost me my neck if it came to the king's ears, very likely. But you are not tall enough to whisper in them ; so here goes !

(HUGUETTE, who is L., takes stool away from GUILLEMETTE which she is bringing down L.C. JEHANNETON brings stool and sits L.O. VILLON springs to his feet, drapes his tattered cloak closely about him, strikes a commanding attitude, and begins to recite with great solemnity, while LOUIS listens attentively.)

(*The positions of the characters are :—*

TRISTAN seated R. of table R.

GUY TABARIE standing well above table R.

LOUIS seated L. of table R.

ISABEAU on his knee.

BLANCHE up C.

On her left, RENÉ DE MONTIGNY.

Below him, slightly to L., DENISE.

Then CASIN CHOLET.

GUILLEMETTE R. of settle.

JEHANNETON in front of her, sitting.

JEHAN LE LOUP standing in front to her left.

HUGUETTE seated down L., facing left.

COLIN DE CAYEULX leaning on back of settle.

ROBIN sitting on settle.)

(JEHAN LE LOUP hushes for quietness.)

VILLON. (*Reciting.*)

All French folk, whereso'er ye be,
Who love your country, soil and sand,
From Paris to the Breton sea,
And back again to Norman strand,

Forsooth ye seem a silly band,
 Sheep without shepherd, left to chance—
 Far otherwise our Fatherland
 If Villon were the King of France!

(VILLON'S friends applaud. ISABEAU gets off LOUIS' knee and sits on the floor by LOUIS' feet. HUGUETTE moves more c. and faces c.)

The figure on the throne you see
 Is nothing but a puppet, planned
 To wear the regal bravery
 Of silken coat and gilded wand;
 Not so we Frenchmen understand
 The Lord of lion's heart and glance—
 And such a one would take command
 If Villon were the King of France!

(VILLON'S friends cry "Villon!" enthusiastically. COLIN and CAYEULX stands on stool below table and applauds.)

VILLON. His counsellors are rogues, perdie!
 While men of honest mind are banned,
 To creak upon the gallows tree,
 Or squeal in prisons over-mann'd;
 We want a chief to bear the brand
 And bid the damned Burgundians dance:
 God! where the Oriflamme should stand
 If Villon were the King of France!

(VILLON'S friends applaud.)

Envoi.

Louis, the Little, play the grand!
 Buffet the foe with sword and lance;
 'Tis what would happen, by this hand,
 If Villon were the King of France!

(General acclamations. ISABEAU gets up c., moves round table up R. to other table.)

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY (up c.). Well crowed, chanticleer!

HUGUETTE (rising to him c., throwing arms about him). I forgive you much, for that light in your eyes.

(Then the crowd regather round table. JEHANNETON takes HUGUETTE'S stool to table. GUILLEMETTE takes JEHANNETON'S stool and puts it by settle.)

LOUIS. You call yourself a patriot, I suppose.

HUGUETTE sits on stool by settle. All the others are now round the table. ROBIN is still on settle.)

VILLON (*has leaned as if exhausted against his barrel. He turns to the KING*). By no such high-sounding title. I am but a poor devil with a heart too big for his body, and a hope too large for his hoop. Had I been begotten in a brocaded bed I might have led armies and served France, have loved ladies without fear of cudgelings, and told kings truths without dread of the halter, while, as it is, (*rising from barrel*), I consort with sharps and wantons, and make my complaint to a dull little buzzard like you, old noodle! Oh, 'tis a fool's play, and it were well to be out of it. (VILLON goes up c.; the others are engrossed with themselves.)

TRISTAN (*to himself*). You won't have long to worry.

LOUIS. You are sententious!

(HUGUETTE goes up to table and sits, kicking RENÉ DE MONTIGNY out of her stool.)

(JEHANNETON comes down to c., end of settle.)

VILLON. The quintessence of envy, no less. I have great thoughts, great desires, great ambitions, great appetites, what you will. I might have changed the world and left a memory. As it is, I sleep in a garret under the shadow of the gallows, and I shall be forgotten to-morrow, even by the wolves I pack with. But this is dry thinking; let's to drinking. (*Comes down.*)

(JEHANNETON points out to VILLON, ROBIN asleep on settle. Crowd gathers round back of settle and watch VILLON, who dexterously unhooks his bunch of keys from his girdle, and, with a triumphant gesture, makes on tiptoe for the cellar door L.I.E., which he unlocks, and through which he disappears. The others resume their game at the table. HUGUETTE is occupied telling her own fortune with cards. After VILLON's exit, GUY TABARIE rolls up barrel to former place.)

TRISTAN (*rises and comes to front of table*). Shall I hang him to-morrow?

LOUIS (*rises also and goes c.*). We shall see! He is a loose-lipped fellow, but he might have been a man. He has set me thinking of my dream. I was a swine rooting in the streets of Paris. I found a pearl—well, well! (*Returning.*) Let us kill the time with cards. I linger because I expect company. Thibaut d'Aussigny, no less.

(*Crossing in front of table to R. and sitting.*)

TRISTAN. The Constable of Paris!

LOUIS. He does not expect to find me here, I promise you. He would not come if he did. (*The catch of the door c. is rattled.*) Barber Olivier is to warn me of his coming. Is that he?

TRISTAN (*looking round*). No, sire, another old woman.

(LOUIS and TRISTAN sit and play cards.)

(VILLON'S MOTHER enters c., an old, bowed woman, miserably but neatly clad; she peers about her, shading her eyes with her hand. RENÉ DE MONTIGNY catches sight of her and skips towards her with a reverence.)

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY (L.C. up stage). Your pleasure, sweet princess?

MOTHER VILLON (c.). Is Master François Villon in this company, sir?

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. Exquisite creature, I kiss your hand and inquire. (*Leaves her standing by door, and goes back to his companions. He points derisively at HUGUETTE, who has hidden her face in her hands over her cards, goes to her and speaks over her shoulder.*) There is a beautiful woman at the door beseeching our François.

HUGUETTE (*leaping up angrily*). What do you say? (*Crosses L.C. to MOTHER VILLON. The rest rise.*) Whom you do seek here? (*HUGUETTE starts on seeing the wrinkled face.*)

MOTHER VILLON. Asking your pardon, young gentleman. (*The rest roar with laughter at the old woman's mistake.*) I seek Master François Villon.

HUGUETTE. Seek him and find him. Montigny, you beast! (*She makes for RENÉ DE MONTIGNY, who dodges her behind table.*)

MOTHER VILLON comes slowly down stage towards c. The others gather about her, mocking her, and finally joining hands, proceed to dance around the bewildered old woman in a circle, singing a ribald song. The old woman, frightened, stands still. At this moment VILLON re-enters, puts wine on settle, locks door and takes keys and stands L.C. until COLIN DE CAYEULX comes near him, floors COLIN DE CAYEULX with a blow from the bunch of keys, and draws his MOTHER down stage L. The others run apart.)

VILLON. Damn you, chubs! It's my mother. Don't be frightened, mammy; they meant no harm.

(ROBIN runs wildly forward.)

ROBIN (*coming down to c.*). My keys, my keys! (*Goes up stage looking. The crowd hustle him.*) Where are my keys? (*Finds them on stage, and comes down R.C.*)

(COLIN DE CAYEULX staggers to his feet, draws dagger and rushes to VILLON. HUGUETTE stops his rush and throws him up c.)

COLIN DE CAYEULX. Curse you, you've cracked my crown.

HUGUETTE (*to others*). She's his mother; you all had mothers, I suppose. (COLIN DE CAYEULX sits in window seat up L.C.) Let her alone!

(GUY TABARIE goes out c. The others gather round table again; LOUIS and TRISTAN still sit at their table and observe. VILLON and his MOTHER sit together on settle L.C.)

VILLON (*sitting L. of seat*). Did they frighten you, mammy ? But they meant no harm—boys and girls, girls and boys.

MOTHER VILLON (*sitting R. of seat*). Come home, François, come home ! (*She puts her arms round him. VILLON grimaces, but makes no attempt to repulse her.*) Where have you been these three days ?

VILLON. Very busy, mammy—State secrets ; mum's the word. How did you find me out ?

MOTHER VILLON. They told me at the " Unicorn " I might find you here.

VILLON. Oh, the " Unicorn " is no longer fashionable. They want payment on the nail there, confound them ! Besides, this is nearer the walls, and we can hear the Burgundians shouting. 'Tis as good as a relish with our wine (*drinks out of stolen jug*).

(*During following scene ROBIN gets more wine from R.C. barrel for TRISTAN and LOUIS, and stands watching their play until GUY TABARIE'S entrance.*)

MOTHER VILLON. Come away ; you've had wine enough.

VILLON. Never in my life, mammy ! I've a fool's head ; I always get into my altitudes too soon. I can't come home just now, but there's something I can do for you. Do you remember when I was a little child ?—God ! when I was a little child——

MOTHER VILLON. You were the prettiest child woman ever bore.

VILLON. You used to sing me to sleep. (*Rocking her.*) Do, do, l'enfant do, l'enfant, dormira tantôt. Well, mammy, your dutiful son has made a song for you to sing yourself to sleep with. I went to church the other day (*kneeling*). Oh ! on my honour I did—and a prayer came into my head—a prayer for you to Our Lady.

MOTHER VILLON. My love-bird !

VILLON. Here it is ! Listen.

Lady of Heaven, Queen of Earth,
Empress of Hell, I kneel and plead
You pity, by the Holy Birth,
The humblest Christian of the Creed ;
I cannot write ; I cannot read ;
I am a woman poor and old,
But in the church, where I behold
The gates of Paradise, I cry,
Woman to woman, make me bold
In thy belief to live and die.

There, mammy ! there's a pretty prayer for you.

MOTHER VILLON (*sobbing on his shoulder*). You should have been a good man.

VILLON (*very gently and rising*). We are as Heaven pleases, dear.

And now run away, mammy, and pray yourself to sleep. You shall see me soon, I promise you.

(He conducts her up stage to door c., which he opens for her. She kisses him and goes out. He comes moodily down stage.)

JEHAN LE LOUP *(pushing ISABEAU forward, who attempts to kiss VILLON)*. Kiss a young mouth for a change.

VILLON *(pushing ISABEAU off R.)*. Go to the devil!

(Crosses to L. He sits staring at the fire, muttering and gesticulating to himself.)

ISABEAU. *(Going to table with JEHAN LE LOUP.)* He's in one of his bad moods. Leave him to himself.

(ROBIN goes to cupboard. GUY TABARIE opens door c., rushes in and down c.)

GUY TABARIE. Friends, there's a fight at Fat Margot's between two wenches. They're stripped to the waist and at it hammer and tongs. Come and see, for the love of God! *(He disappears. The others leap to their feet.)*

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY *(c., rushing out)*. I'll crown the victor!

JEHAN LE LOUP. I'll console the vanquished!

HUGUETTE. I'll see fair play! *(They all go out, except HUGUETTE, who goes to VILLON, down L.C.)* Will you come, François?

VILLON *(on settle drinking wine)*. Nay, I am reading.

HUGUETTE *(looking over)*. You lie!

VILLON. A man may read without a book. Go your ways, girl, and skelp both the hussies!

HUGUETTE *(goes up and out c., after the others, calling)*. Wait for me!—wait for me!—Guy! René! Blanche! Jehanneton!

(LOUIS and TRISTAN are still playing at cards. ROBIN has withdrawn to his own quarters, L.U.E. VILLON, after shutting door after HUGUETTE's exit and drawing curtain, makes preparation to sleep on settle.)

TRISTAN *(L. of table)*. Your barber tarries.

LOUIS *(R. of table)*. The game makes amends.

TRISTAN. You are winning, sire.

LOUIS. My grandsire will be remembered longer than most kings for the sake of these wasters and winners that they made to soothe his madness.

(Music.)

TRISTAN. My game, sire!

(The door c. opens and an armed servant enters: he looks round, then moves back to the door, returning to stand half down c. KATHERINE DE VAUCELLES enters. She is closely muffled, after the fashion of

disguise adopted by discreet ladies when they walked abroad in Paris in the fifteenth century.)

KATHERINE (L.C.). You are sure this is the place ?

SERVANT (C.). Sure.

KATHERINE. Wait outside.

(Servant goes out. She looks about her. There is no sign of ROBIN.

VILLON is asleep on the settle. She sees the two men R., and comes down stage to L. of TRISTAN, whose shoulder she touches. He turns to speak with her. LOUIS takes advantage of his turned back to examine TRISTAN's hand, which he has laid upon the table, and to substitute a card from his own hand for one of his adversary's.)

KATHERINE (R.C.). Has Master François Villon been here to-night ?

TRISTAN (*sitting L. of table*). Yonder he squats by the hearth.

KATHERINE. I thank you.

(As she turns away and goes up stage, TRISTAN catches a sight of her face.)

TRISTAN (*over table*). 'Zounds, sire ! do you know who that was ?

LOUIS (*smiling at his cards*). Some *bona roba* who took you for a gull.

TRISTAN. It was your Majesty's kinswoman, the Lady Katherine de Vaucelles.

LOUIS (*rises*). Oh, oh ! Oh, oh ! Does lovely Katherine come to meet Thibaut ? I thought she loathed him.

TRISTAN (*over back of table*). She seeks François Villon, sire.

LOUIS (*putting down cards*). Is she the girl he spoke of ? She's a proud piece, gossip. I told her once that she took my fancy, and she flamed up in a red rage that chastened me. (*Going to door R.E., opening it and motioning TRISTAN to exit.*) Do we catch her tripping ?

(TRISTAN goes out. LOUIS goes softly across the stage as if to leave by the door C., but when there, seeing that he is unobserved, he glides across back of stage and conceals himself behind the curtains of the window, where he can hear and observe VILLON and KATHERINE. In the meantime KATHERINE crosses stage slowly to where VILLON sits and touches him lightly, and moves up L.C. VILLON after first touch turns over and groans. KATHERINE touches him again and gets down from L.C. to C.)

KATHERINE (*uncovering her face and whispering*). A word with you.

VILLON (*starting and crossing himself unconsciously, then kneeling*). Are you real ?

KATHERINE (C.). Do I look like a ghost ?

VILLON (L.C.). If this be a dream, pray Heaven I may never wake.

KATHERINE (*showing parchment to VILLON*). You wrote me these verses.

(*Reading.*)

"If I were King—ah, love! if I were King,
What tributary nations I would bring
To kneel before your sceptre"—

VILLON (*interrupting*).

"and to swear

Allegiance to your lips and eyes and hair,
Beneath your feet what treasures I would fling
If I were King."

(*He takes parchment from KATHERINE.*)

KATHERINE. My elders tell me that poets say much and mean little; that their oaths are like gingerbread, as hot and sweet in the mouth and as easily swallowed. (*Getting away R.O. a little.*) Are you such a one?

VILLON (*rising*). I am your servant!

KATHERINE. Are your words gold or gilded?

VILLON. My words are my life. I love you!

KATHERINE. Just because I show a smooth face!

(*KATHERINE sits L. of table.*)

VILLON (c.). If all my dreams of loveliness had been pieced together into one perfect woman she would have been like you. All my life I have read tales of love and tried to find their secret in the bright eyes about me—tried and failed. I might as well have been seeking for the Holy Grail. But when I saw you the old Heaven and the old Earth seemed to shrivel away and I knew what love might mean. The world is changed by your coming; all sweet tastes and fair colours and soft sounds have something of *you* in them. I eat and drink, I see and hear in your honour. The people in the street are blessed because you have passed among them. (*He moves two steps up c.*) That stone on the ground is sacred, for your feet have touched it (*going R.O.*). I love you! All philosophy, all wisdom, religion, honour, manhood, hope, beauty lie in those words—I love you!

(*Kneeling and kissing her dress.*)

KATHERINE (*rising*). Well, I have come to put your protestations to the proof. If you meant every word you said, you can serve me well. If not (*speaking severely*), good night and good-bye. (*She crosses in front of VILLON to up c.*)

VILLON (*rising and with L. hand outstretched stopping her*). I wrote with my heart's blood!

KATHERINE (c.). Listen. I am one of the Queen's ladies. Thibaut d'Aussigny, the Grand Constable of France, loves me a little and my broad lands much, and he swears that I shall marry him.

He tried to force me to his will, to shame me to his pleasure, (VILLON goes a little down R.C.) and so I hate him, and so should you, for it was he who gave you your beating.

VILLON (*going a step towards her*). Oh, it was he——

KATHERINE. He gave your rhymes to me, and told me how you had been treated. (VILLON sits L. of table.) When I read them I said, "Here, if a poet speaks truth, is the one man in France who can help me."

VILLON. Why not your yellow-haired, pink-faced lover?

KATHERINE. Noel le Jolys is a man many women might love—but I love no man. I only hate Thibaut d'Aussigny. Do you understand?

VILLON. I begin to understand.

(*There is a long pause.*)

KATHERINE (*eagerly to him, going R.O.*). Kill Thibaut d'Aussigny. You are a skilful swordsman, they say. You are little better than an outlaw. You swear you love me more than life. Kill Thibaut d'Aussigny. (*Turning up C. and going to settle slowly.*) Are you less eager to serve me than you were?

VILLON (*rising and going C.*). No, by Heaven! but I've been dozing and dreaming; and I've got to rub the sleep out of my eyes and the dream out of my heart. Tell me how to serve you.

(*Bows to her.*)

KATHERINE (*sitting on settle and speaking rapidly*). Thibaut d'Aussigny comes here to-night. He has come here before in disguise, for I have had him followed. I think he means to betray the King to the Burgundians, so you will serve France as well as me. How do such men as you kill each other?

VILLON (*moving down C. a little*). Generally in a drunken scuffle. Will you wait here till he comes, pretty lady, for I never saw him? Then leave the rest to me.

KATHERINE. You love me very much?

VILLON (*up C.*). With all the meaning that the word can have in Paradise.

KATHERINE. You didn't expect to be taken at your word?

VILLON (*bowing and going towards her*). I didn't hope to be; I will try to be worthy of the honour.

KATHERINE. You love and laugh in the same breath.

VILLON (*going away R.C.*). That is my philosophy.

KATHERINE (*rising and going a little towards him*). If you wish (VILLON turns and KATHERINE puts out hand), you may kiss my hand.

VILLON (C.). Nay, I can fight, and, if needs must, die in your quarrel; but if once I touched you so, that might make life too sweet to adventure.

(*Music.*)

KATHERINE (*somewhat stiffly, moving away to L.*). As you will
(*The noise of shouting, singing and trampling feet is heard outside.*)

VILLON (*down C., beckoning her upstairs*). My friends returning.
They mustn't see you. Come this way.

(*They cross up stage to R. stairs and ascend to gallery.*)

Here you can see without being seen. When he comes, show him
to me. Then you can reach the street by this door. (*Pointing to
door on gallery to L.*)

(*The C. door opens, and the men and women who had gone out stream
noisily in. ROBIN reappears from L.U.E. and comes down L.C.
After entrance of the crowd LOUIS reappears, and moving over to
door R., beckons TRISTAN in.*)

COLIN DE CAYEULX (*C.*). That was rare sport while it lasted.

JEHAN LE LOUP (*down L.C.*). It didn't last long enough.

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. Things took a different turn when you came,
Abbess.

HUGUETTE (*down L.C.*). I did as François bade me, and basted
both the jades (*hitting ROBIN, who is on her L.*). Wine, Robin, wine.
My arms ache.

(*The door opens C., and OLIVIER LE DAIN enters—a small man plainly
clad, with his hood about his face.*)

GUY TABARIE. Lord, how they squeaked and wriggled.

(*ROBIN brings wine. They go to and gather round their table
again.*)

LOUIS (*beckoning TRISTAN in*). Our mad poet may do me a good
turn, gossip Tristan (*both sit at table as before, LOUIS on L. side of it*).

(*ROBIN takes wine to HUGUETTE, who is standing on stool up C. by
table and comes down L.C.*)

VILLON (*above, on balcony*). Is that he?

KATHERINE (*on balcony*). No, no. Thibaut is a big man. Yet
that figure seems familiar.

(*OLIVIER LE DAIN comes to table R., and stoops between LOUIS and
TRISTAN.*)

OLIVIER (*over table*). He is coming, sire.

LOUIS (*sitting L. of table*). You are sure?

OLIVIER. We dogged his footsteps all the way, till I slipped ahead.
Here he comes!

(*OLIVIER slips out through door R.I.E.*)

(*The door C. opens, and THIBAUT D'AUSSIGNY enters. He is a tall,
powerful man, and is dressed like a common soldier. He glances*

about him as he enters, exchanges looks with RENÉ DE MONTIGNY, and comes down to L.C.)

KATHERINE (*above*). That is he!

VILLON. Good!

(He moves away from her and over to table L.C.)

THIBAUT (*coming down to settle*). Wine, landlord! (*To ROBIN, who is down L.C. ROBIN goes up to shut door.*)

(RENÉ DE MONTIGNY leaves his party and comes down to THIBAUT.)

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. A fine evening, friend.

THIBAUT. Pretty fine for the time of year.

LOUIS. Who is he talking with?

TRISTAN (*R. of table*). The rogue of birth I spoke of.

(ROBIN goes to barrel and draws wine.)

THIBAUT. How is your garden, friend?

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY (*L.C.*). Very salubrious, if it were not for the shooting stars.

THIBAUT. How?

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. My quip. The shooting star was a Burgundian arrow a clothyard long, which came winging its way over the walls at noon. Here is what the arrow carried.

(He hands paper to THIBAUT, who goes to lantern over fireplace, and reads it.)

THIBAUT (*returning to L. of RENÉ DE MONTIGNY*). The Duke of Burgundy will give me a duchy if I deliver Louis into his hands. Can you command some safe rogues of your kidney who think better of Burgundian gold than of the fool on the throne?

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. Ay, I know of half a dozen stout lads who would pilfer the King from his palace of the Louvre if they were paid well enough for the job.

THIBAUT. Good! *(He gives RENÉ DE MONTIGNY a purse.)* Meet me again to-morrow. *(RENÉ DE MONTIGNY is about to rejoin his comrades, but VILLON throws him over to R. THIBAUT goes to fireplace. Throws paper away.)* The fool King denies me the mad maid. It shall cost him his crown. *(Moves and is about to go out C.)*

(Music. VILLON now C. bumps into THIBAUT as he goes up.)

VILLON (*C., affecting intoxication*). You walk abroad late, honest soldier.

THIBAUT (*L.C.*). That's my business!

VILLON (*C.*). Don't be testy. Let us crack a bottle.

THIBAUT. I've had enough, and you've had more than enough. Go to bed!

VILLON. You're a damned uncivil fellow, soldier, and don't know how to treat a gentleman when you see one.

THIBAUT. Get out of the way !

VILLON. I will not get out of the way. How do I know you are an honest soldier ? how do I know that you are a true man ?

(ROBIN is about to bring wine, when he hears the altercation. As VILLON'S voice rises, the altercation attracts the others, who rise. RENÉ DE MONTIGNY slips to VILLON'S side, dragging him down R.C.)

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY (*whispers*). Let him alone, François ; he's not what he seems.

VILLON (*pushing RENÉ DE MONTIGNY R.*). Seems ! who cares what he seems ! It's what he is, I want to know. Perhaps he's not an honest soldier at all. Perhaps he's a damned Burgundian spy.

(ALL get more excited and rush from table towards THIBAUT.)

THIBAUT (L.C.). Fling this drunken dog into the street !

VILLON (C.). Drunken dog, indeed ! You are a lying, ill-favoured knave ! Keep the door, friends ; this rogue has insulted me. Pluck out your iron, soldier !

(The others gather round. The women draw back, except HUGUETTE, who comes forward C. RENÉ DE MONTIGNY makes a sign to THIBAUT, and slips out by door C.)

THIBAUT. Who the devil are you ?

VILLON. My name is François Villon, and my sword is as good as another man's.

THIBAUT (L.C., *laughing*). Are you François Villon ? Lend me a cudgel, some one !

VILLON (*getting cup from R. table and flinging wine in his face*). The devil take you, coward !

THIBAUT (*going towards VILLON*). You fool, I'll kill you !

VILLON (*replacing cup on R. table*). We shall see.

HUGUETTE (*coming between them*). Fair play, fair play—this is David and Goliath. (*Striking THIBAUT on cuirass.*) We'll have equal chances here. Let them fight with sword and lantern in the dark !

(Others applaud. CASIN CHOLET gets lantern from fireplace up stage, COLIN DE CAYEULX gets lantern from fireplace down stage.)

VILLON (R.C.). What do you say, Goliath ?

THIBAUT (C.). Any way you please, on this understanding : when there's an end of you there's an end of the quarrel.

VILLON (*going down R.C.*). That's promised. Swear, Huguette !

HUGUETTE (C.). I swear !

(**THIBAUT** takes off helmet, cloak and scabbard, and puts them on settle.

COLIN DE CAYEULX gives lantern to **THIBAUT**. **CASIN CHOLET** gives lantern to **HUGUETTE**. She gives it to **VILLON**. **GUY TABARIE** keeps the landlord quiet by menacing him with his dagger. The women crowd on the stairs R.)

TRISTAN (rising). This must be stopped, sire.

LOUIS. Not at all, gossip; whichever kills the other saves the hangman some labour. (*Rises.*)

VILLON. Now, friends, keep a ring and dowsse the glim.

(**GUY TABARIE** moves table and seats to near R. and blows out light. **HUGUETTE** blows out light on L. table.)

(*Going to THIBAUT.*) I think I shall square our reckoning, Master Thibaut!

(*This is spoken in a low tone. HUGUETTE and CASIN CHOLET get L. by settle which they have pushed up against L. wall.*)

THIBAUT. You know me?

VILLON. Your varlets thumped me yesterday; I shall tickle you to-day. Turn and turn about, Thibaut.

(*The stage is quite dark.*)

HUGUETTE. Are you ready?

(*All present stand apart: the women on the staircase, except HUGUETTE, who is down L. in front of settle pushed against wall; the men are round the room. The lights are lowered and the stage is supposed to be in total darkness but for the lanterns that the two men carry; but there must be enough light to distinguish the two figures, as they creep about the stage, seeking and avoiding each other.*)

TRISTAN (standing R. of table which has been moved). Sire, had you not better go?

(*Trying to draw him off R.I.E.*)

LOUIS (sitting L. of table). I wouldn't miss this for the world.

HUGUETTE. Are you ready?

(*The fight commences with gleam of shifting lights and clash of meeting steel. At a certain part of the fight THIBAUT thrusts at VILLON'S lantern. This is the signal for HUGUETTE to call "Stand Back!" to CASIN CHOLET, who is about to rush at THIBAUT. On this cue "Stand Back!" the music quietens, JEHAN LE LOUP hushes those present, and three distinct knocks on C. door are heard before the CAPTAIN'S line is spoken.*)

VOICE (outside). Open in the King's name!

TRISTAN (R.). 'Tis the watch!

THIBAUT (C.). Open the door!

VILLON (R.C.). Not so fast, Jack-rascal!

(The blows resound upon the door. The fight continues until THIBAUT puts lantern down and is about to deal VILLON a two-handed blow on the head. VILLON runs him through. THIBAUT groans, drops sword and falls after COLIN DE CAYEULX has picked the sword and lantern up. Immediately THIBAUT falls the c. door is forced open. JEHAN LE LOUP comes down L.O. and joins COLIN DE CAYEULX. RENÉ DE MONTIGNY enters, followed by the CAPTAIN leading torch-bearers and soldiers. RENÉ DE MONTIGNY runs to THIBAUT and assists him. CAPTAIN is C., VILLON R.C. The CAPTAIN stands at the door until VILLON has received the ribbon. VILLON, standing over THIBAUT, with his sword to his body, turns and looks up at the gallery. KATHERINE, leaning forward, flings him a knot of ribbon which falls at his feet; she disappears by gallery door L. VILLON picks knot of ribbon up and thrusts it into his breast as the CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH advances.)

CAPTAIN (C.). What is this tumult?

VILLON (R.C.). A fair fight, good captain, conducted according to the honourable laws of sword and lantern. *(VILLON hands lantern to GUY TABARIE, who is R.)*

CAPTAIN *(approaching THIBAUT L.O.)*. Who is this man?

(RENÉ DE MONTIGNY has lifted THIBAUT and is supporting his head on his knee.)

THIBAUT (L.). I am Thibaut d'Aussigny, the Grand Constable!

(Movement of surprise and alarm among the spectators. The CAPTAIN kneels and recognizes THIBAUT.)

CAPTAIN (L.). Monseigneur, how did this happen?

THIBAUT *(pointing to VILLON)*. Take that fellow and hang him from the nearest lantern. *(Falls back fainting.)*

(VILLON is arrested by soldiers. Two soldiers cross halberds in front of him. VILLON drops sword. HUGUETTE rushes from settle and kneels to VILLON.)

CAPTAIN. Take that fellow outside and hang him.

LOUIS *(rising and coming forward)*. Stop, sir! that young gentleman is my affair.

CAPTAIN (C.). Who are you that dares to interfere with the King's justice?

LOUIS *(unhooding, R.C.)*. I am the King's justice!

TRISTAN *(uncovering, R.)*. God save the King! *(All kneel except soldiers.)*

VILLON. The King! Good Lord!

CURTAIN on last word.

ACT II

THE GARDEN. *Strike 12: 6 before, 6 after curtain. This scene is the garden of King Louis' Palace within the walls of Paris. A terrace with steps down from it extends at back of stage. At B. a portion of one of the towers of the Palace is visible with a postern door. Sundial up L.C. Marble seat down R. All the garden in red with many shades of red, pale pink and deep crimson, and imperial purple.*

When the curtain rises LOUIS enters from R., walking restlessly to and fro, with his hands clasped behind him. He is dressed in his familiar dress of faded black velvet. An Astrologer follows him and stands by seat R.

LOUIS (*going up C. and coming down again*). Well, Master Wizard, how do you interpret my dream and the shining text of the stars?

ASTROLOGER (*coming from R.C. to C.*). Your pearl of great price tells me that there is one in the depths who, if he be exalted to the heights, may serve and save the state. Of such a one it is written in the stars that he would have potent influence for seven days from this day. Then the Book of Heaven is confused, and the portent of the falling star puzzles me.

LOUIS (*C., points R.I.E.*). Go. (**ASTROLOGER enters tower R.I.E.; LOUIS watches him off, and then walks restlessly up and down, C.). "If Villon were the King of France." How that mad ballad-maker glowed last night. Fools are proverbially fortunate, and a mad man may save Paris for me as a mad maid saved France for my sire. (**TRISTAN enters L.U.E.**). Well, Tristan? (*coming down L.*)**

TRISTAN (*comes down R.C. and uncovers*). Thibaut d'Aussigny, whose wound was not mortal, has escaped from his house in disguise and fled to the Duke of Burgundy.

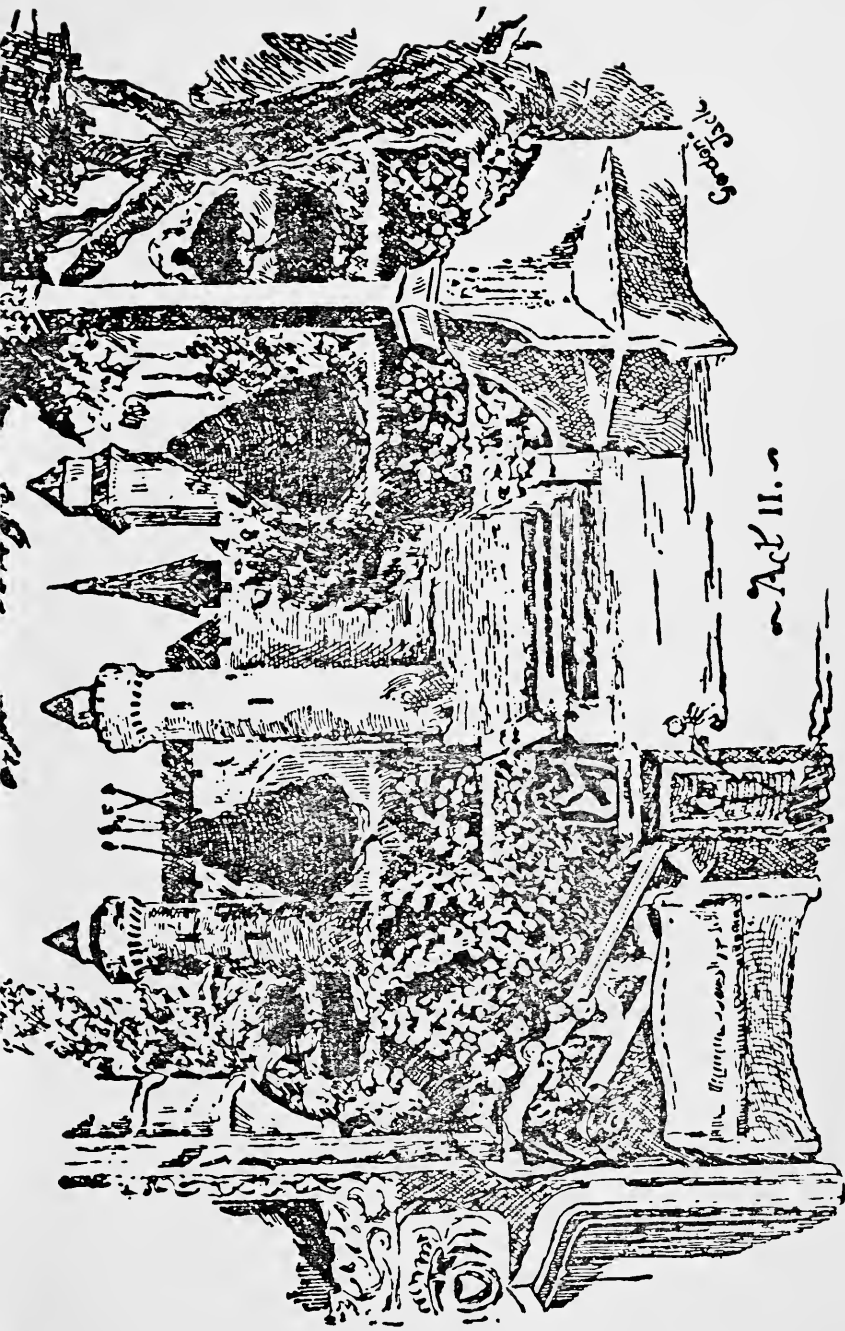
LOUIS. I wish the Duke joy of him.

TRISTAN. The tavern rabble are in custody of Messire Noel.

LOUIS (*going to TRISTAN*). And my rival for royalty?

TRISTAN. Barber Olivier has charge of him. I would have hanged the rogue out of hand.

LOUIS. Your turn will come, gossip, never doubt it (*moves away L. up L.C. and down C. to TRISTAN*). But the stars warn me that I need this rhyming ragamuffin. There is a tale of Haroun al Raschid.



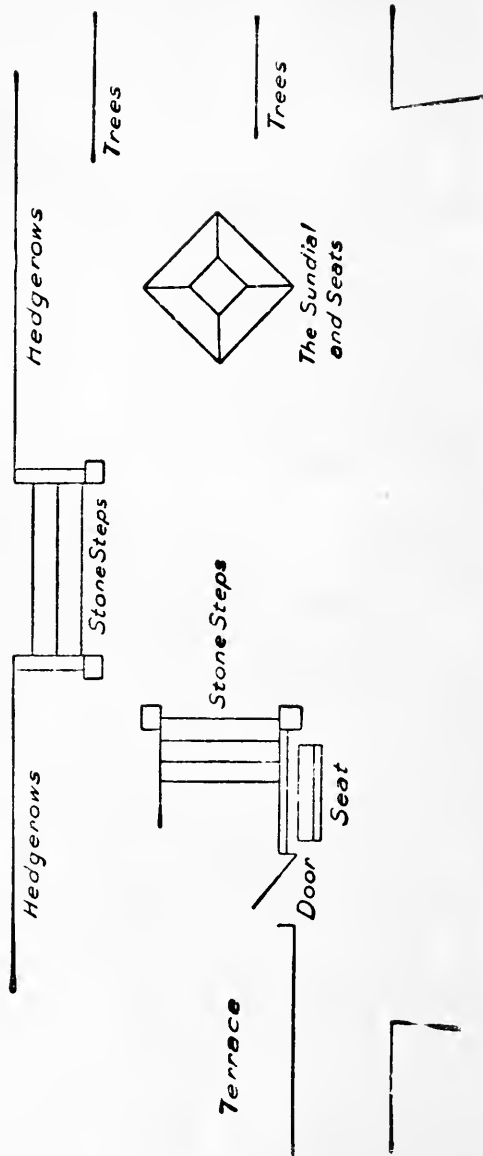
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~ Act II. ~

THE MOUNTAIN OF THE MOUNTAIN

ACT II.

The Castle



TRISTAN (C.). Another tale, sire!

LOUIS. How he picked a drunken rascal from the streets and took him to his palace. When the rascal woke sober the courtiers persuaded him that he was the Caliph, and the Commander of the Faithful found great sport in his behaviour. (*Pauses, then moves away L.*) I promise myself a like diversion.

TRISTAN (*anxiously*). Are you going to let him think he is king, sire?

LOUIS. Not quite. (*Crosses to R. in front of TRISTAN.*) When he wakes he is to be assured that he is the Count of Montcorbier and Grand Constable of France. His antics may amuse me (*facing front and then crossing L.*), his lucky star may serve me, and his winning tongue may help to avenge me on the froward maid, who comes hither. Send me here Olivier.

(*TRISTAN goes out R.; LOUIS stands C., watching KATHERINE'S entrance.*)

(*KATHERINE enters L.I.E., with her arms full of roses, and curtsys.*)

LOUIS (L.C.). Where are you going, girl?

KATHERINE (*crossing to R. in front of LOUIS*). To her Majesty, sire, who bade me gather roses.

(*LOUIS turns and says "Ah." KATHERINE stops.*)

LOUIS (*approaching KATHERINE*). Give me one. (*She does so. She is on the first of the steps. Taking her by the chin.*) You are a pretty child. You might have had a king's love. (*Getting away to L.C. and throwing rose away.*) Well, well, you were a fool. Does not Thibaut d'Aussigny woo you?

KATHERINE. He professes to love me, sire, and I profess to hate him.

LOUIS (*going to dial*). He was sorely wounded last night in a tavern scuffle.

KATHERINE. Only wounded? (*Coming C.*)

LOUIS. Your solicitude is adorable. Be of cheer. (*Sitting on sundial.*) He may recover. And we have clapped hands on his assassin. He shall pay the penalty.

KATHERINE. Sire, I bear this man no malice for hurting Thibaut d'Aussigny.

LOUIS. You are clemency itself. It would never do to have a woman on the throne (*crossing hands on chest*). But to hurt a great lord is to hurt the whole body politic. He shall swing for it.

KATHERINE. This man should not die, sire. (*LOUIS looks at her.*) Thibaut was a traitor, a villain—

LOUIS (*shaking finger at her*). Take care, sweeting, lest you wade out of your depth. (*Rising and getting above her.*) But you women are fountains of compassion. If this knave's life interests you, (*crossing to R.C.*) plead for it to my lord the Grand Constable.

KATHERINE (*moves down L. a little*). Thibaut is pitiless.

LOUIS (*up R.C.*). Thibaut is no longer in office. Try your luck with his successor.

(*Chuckles and moves down R.*)

KATHERINE (*going down stage and looking up at LOUIS*). His name, sire?

LOUIS (*smiling*). The Count of Montcorbier. He is a stranger in our court, who has found a lodging in my heart. You shall have audience of him. (*Sees OLIVIER entering.*) Ah, Olivier!

(*To OLIVIER, who enters down steps R.I.E. and bows. KATHERINE gets up L.C.*)

LOUIS. By and by, when my Lord Constable takes the air in the garden, bring this lady to him. (*LOUIS goes up to KATHERINE L.C., and brings her to exit R. up the steps, crossing her in front of himself.*) Now go, girl, or my wife and your queen will be wanting her roses. (*KATHERINE crosses, and goes out R. up steps.*) Well, goodman barber, what of François Villon? (*After watching exit, LOUIS moves away C. OLIVIER goes up R.C. and LOUIS crosses to marble seat R. and sits.*)

OLIVIER (*coming down to left side of LOUIS*). A pot of drugged wine last night sent him to sleep in a prison. This morning he woke in a palace, lapped in the linen of a royal bed. He has been washed and barbered (*LOUIS jokes at OLIVIER*), sumptuously dressed and rarely perfumed. He is so changed that his dearest friend wouldn't know him. He doesn't even know himself. He carries himself as if he had been a courtier all his days. (*Moves away towards C. a little.*)

LOUIS. I have little doubt that when the jackass wore the lion's skin he thought himself the lion. But is he not amazed?

OLIVIER. Too much amazed, sire (*going towards LOUIS*), to betray amazement. His attendants assure him, with the gravest faces, that he is the Grand Constable of France (*getting away to L.C.*). I believe he thinks himself in a dream, and, finding the dream delicate, accepts it.

LOUIS (*rising and going C.*). Have the fellow sent here, and remember only you and I and Tristan know or must know who he truly is. (*OLIVIER goes out up steps to palace, R.U.E. LOUIS recommences walking up and down stage.*) This Jack and Jill shall dance to my whimsy like dolls upon a wire. It would be rare sport if Mistress Katherine disdained Louis to decline upon this beggar (*up C.*). He shall hang for mocking me. But he carried himself like a king for all his tatters and patches, and he shall taste of splendour. (*Looks R.U.E. Comes down R.C.*) Here comes my mountebank, as pompous as if he were born to the purple.

(*Goes out by tower R.I.E.*)

(*VILLON enters at R.U.E. back and descends steps. He is magnificently dressed, and carries himself with the air of a Grand Seigneur.*)

His face is now smooth-shaven, his hair trimmed and dressed smoothly, and he consequently looks very different from the VILLON of the first act. He is preceded by OLIVIER LE DAIN, who is preceded by four PAGES, two of whom carry golden trays with flagons and cups. The PAGES stand on steps, two at top and two at bottom, and VILLON passes between them. OLIVIER bows to VILLON, and down stage to R.C. Two PAGES come down stage and place flagons on sundial, and then stand down L.)

OLIVIER (R.C., *bowing*). Will your dignity deign to linger awhile in this rose arbour?

VILLON (*affably, c.*). My dignity will deign to do anything you suggest, good master blackamoor. (*Aside, crossing down c. to L.*) Better to humour them.

OLIVIER (R.C.). I shall have to trouble you presently with certain small cares of state.

VILLON (L.C.). No trouble, excellent myrmidon. These duties are pleasures to your true man. (*Aside.*) What on earth are they talking about?

OLIVIER. His Majesty will probably honour you with *his* company later.

VILLON. Always delighted to see dear Louis. He and I are very good friends. People say hard things of him, but, believe me, they don't know him (*crossing to R., down stage*).

OLIVIER. May we take our leave, monseigneur?

VILLON. You may, you may. (OLIVIER *moves up c. Approaching OLIVIER.*) Stay, one moment. (OLIVIER *returns, bowing.*) You know this plaguy memory of mine; what a forgetful fellow I am. Would you mind telling me again who I happen to be?

OLIVIER (c.). You are the Count of Montcorbier, monseigneur.

VILLON (*astonished*). The Count of —

OLIVIER (*bowing*). Montcorbier, monseigneur.

VILLON (*going away R.*). Montcorbier: Montcorbier: Montcorbier.

OLIVIER (*bowing*). The Grand Constable of France, monseigneur.

VILLON (*coming up R.C.*). Eh!

OLIVIER. The Grand Constable of France, monseigneur (*bowing*). It is his Majesty's wish that you contrive to remember this.

VILLON (c.). Of course, it was most foolish of me to forget. Now I suppose, good master long toes (*business from OLIVIER*), that a person in my exalted rank has a good deal of power, influence, authority, and what not?

OLIVIER. With the King's favour, you are the first man in the realm.

VILLON. Quite so. And does my exalted position carry with it any agreeable perquisite in the way of pocket-money?

OLIVIER. If you will dip your fingers in your pouch——

(VILLON *goes down R.C. and thrusts a hand into pouch at belt and brings out a handful of gold pieces.*)

VILLON. Gold counters, on my honour (*returning up to c.*). Good sir, will you straightway despatch someone you can trust to the Church of the Celestins, and inquire of the beadle there for the dwelling of Mother Villon, a poor old woman, sorely plagued with a scapegrace son? Let him seek her out—she dwells on the seventh story, and therefore the nearer to the Heaven she deserves—and give her these coins that she may buy herself food, clothes, and firing. (*Goes down R.*)

OLIVIER (*bows and goes to dial*). It shall be done. If there be anything your dignity should desire, you have but to sound upon this bell.

(*Picking up bell off dial L.C.*)

VILLON (C.). You are very good. Eh! stay one moment. (OLIVIER *returns bowing*.) The Count of—

OLIVIER. Montcorbier.

(VILLON *repeats the word several times*. OLIVIER and two PAGES *withdraw with every sign of the most profound deference*. No hint of any suppressed mirth, no consciousness of a hidden joke is to interrupt for a moment the gravity of the scene as far as OLIVIER and the PAGES are concerned. As soon as they have gone out, VILLON looks curiously around him and goes to dial to drink. When about to drink he sees PAGE L.C., puts down cup and dismisses him. Dismisses second PAGE R.C. and comes down C.)

VILLON. Last night, I was a red-handed outlaw sleeping on the straw of a dungeon. To-day, I wake in a royal bed and my varlets call me Monseigneur. There are but three ways of explaining this singular situation. (*Ticking points on fingers*.) Either I am drunk, or I am mad, or I am dreaming. If I am drunk, I shall never distinguish Bordeaux wine from Burgundy, a melancholy dilemma (*going to dial*). Let's test it. (*Crosses to dial, pours wine, sniffs, drinks*.) This quintessence of crushed violets ripened no otherwhere than in the valleys of Bordeaux. (*Pours from other flagon, drinks*.) By Heaven, no nobler juice ever rippled from Burgundian vineyards. Ergo, I am not drunk. (*Sits on dial*.) I do not think I am mad either, for I know in my heart that I am poor François Villon, penniless Master of Arts, and no will-o'-the-wisp Grand Constable. Then am I dreaming, fast asleep in the chimney corner of the Fir Cone tavern, having finished that flask I filched (*feeling under seat of dial for flask*) and everything since then has been, and is, a dream. The coming of Katherine, a dream. My fight with Thibaut d'Aussigny, a dream. Then the King—popping up at the last moment, like a Jack-in-the-box—a dream. (*Rises, moves down R.C. and then up C.*) These clothes, those servants, this garden—dreams, dreams, dreams. I shall wake presently, and be devilish cold and devilish hungry and devilish

shabby. But in the meantime these dream liquors make good drinking (*going to dial L.C.*).

(*Clock strikes. As he is about to pour out another cup OLIVIER LE DAIN enters L.U.E. and comes down R.C.*)

OLIVIER (R.C.). Your dignity will forgive me, but it is the King's wish you should pass judgment on certain prisoners.

VILLON (*putting down cup L.C.*). I? And here?

OLIVIER (R.C.). Such is the King's pleasure.

VILLON (*coming C.*). What prisoners?

OLIVIER. Certain rogues and vagabonds, mankind and woman-kind, taken brawling in the Fir Cone tavern last night.

VILLON (C.). Tell me, is Master François Villon, Master of Arts, rhymist at his best, vagabond at his worst, ne'er-do-well at all seasons and scapegrace in all moods, among them?

OLIVIER (*bowing very low*). Your dignity is pleased to jest. Shall I send you the prisoners?

VILLON. Can I do with them as I wish?

OLIVIER. Absolutely as you wish. Such is the King's will.

VILLON (*crossing to R.*). Set a thief to try a thief. (OLIVIER *backs a little up C.*) Well, bring them in. (OLIVIER *goes out L.U.E.*) Oh! My poor head! Am I awake? Am I asleep? What an imbroglio! That damned fellow in black is confoundedly obsequious. I wonder if I could order *him* to be hanged? He has a hanging face (*going up R.C.*). (*Music start.*) Oh, here come my poor devils! How hangdog they look—and *how dirty*!

(*Clock strikes quarter hour. OLIVIER leads on and points out the GRAND CONSTABLE to NOEL LE JOLYS, L.U.E., who comes down C. OLIVIER exits R.U.E. Enter GUY TABARIE, CASIN CHOLET, COLIN DE CAYEULX, RENÉ DE MONTIGNY, each supported by a soldier. They are taken to steps R. A soldier follows and stands up R.O. After the men: JEHANNETON, ISABEAU, BLANCHE, DENISE, GUILLEMETTE and HUGUETTE. A soldier follows and stands up L.O. on rostrum.*)

VILLON (*coming down from up R.C. to L.C.*) (*Aside.*) The puppet who dangles after my lady. He jars the dream.

NOEL (C., *giving VILLON a paper*). My lord, the names of these night-birds.

VILLON (*taking paper*). Have we ever met before?

NOEL (C.). Alas, no! your lordship has swooped into court like an unheralded comet.

VILLON. Messire Noel, if you and I had a mind to pluck the same rose from this garden, which of us would win?

NOEL. I do not understand you.

VILLON. Never mind. Send me René de Montigny. (NOEL LE JOLYS *goes R. and orders RENÉ DE MONTIGNY forward. VILLON speaks aside, down L.O.*) The popinjay fails to recognize me; so

may my bullies. (RENÉ DE MONTIGNY is pushed forward, L.C., by a soldier. VILLON sits c. on dial.) You are—— ?

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. René de Montigny—of gentle blood—fallen on ungentle days.

(In the course of the scene with the prisoners VILLON conceals his face as much as possible with the paper.)

VILLON. Through no fault of your own, of course ?

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. As your Grace surmises, through no fault of my own. I am poor, but I thank my stars I am honest.

VILLON. Since when, sir ; since last night ?

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. I do not understand your Grace (getting away a little).

(Before speaking, VILLON beckons RENÉ DE MONTIGNY closer.)

VILLON. When Jason was a farmer in Colchis he sowed dragon's teeth and reaped soldiers. What do you sow in your garden, Sire de Montigny ?

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY (bowing low). Cabbages.

VILLON. Arrows, Master René, Burgundian arrows, most condemnable vegetables. Have a care ! 'Tis a pestilent crop and may poison the gardener. Stand aside.

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. If your Grace will deign——

VILLON. Stand aside.

(RENÉ DE MONTIGNY is taken back to steps by his soldier.)

VILLON. Master Guy Tabarie.

(GUY TABARIE is pushed forward by a soldier, trembling.)

GUY TABARIE. My lord.

(Soldier knocks GUY TABARIE on to his knees.)

VILLON. You come with clean hands ?

GUY TABARIE (kneeling). As decent a lad, my lord, as ever kept body and soul together by walking on the strait and narrow path that leads to——

VILLON. The gallows, Master Tabarie.

GUY TABARIE. No, no ; I have the fear of God in me as strong as any man in Paris.

VILLON. Do you know the church of St. Maturin, Master Tabarie ?

GUY TABARIE (still kneeling, but moving a little away). I ! N-no, my lord.

VILLON. Master Tabarie, Master Tabarie, your memory is failing you. Why, no later than the middle of March last you broke into the church at dead of night and pilfered the gold plate from the altar. (GUY TABARIE rises and says, "This must be the devil himself.") The fear of God is not very strong in you.

GUY TABARIE. My lord, I was led astray, my lord, I was not alone——

VILLON. Stand aside. (GUY TABARIE is dragged back to his old position by a soldier.) Colin de Cayeulx and Casin Cholet. (These two are brought forward, a soldier to each.) Are you good citizens, sirs?

COLIN DE CAYEULX (c.). I loathe to sing my own praises, but I can speak frankly for my friend here. The King has no better subject, and Paris no more peaceable burghess than Casin Cholet.

(Clapping him on the shoulder.)

CASIN CHOLET (R.C.). If I have any poor merits I owe them all to this good gentleman's example. I have followed his lead, halting and humble. Keep your eye on Colin de Cayeulx, I have ever said to myself, and learn how a good man lives.

VILLON. You are the Castor and Pollux of purity? (They bow, close together.) Do you remember the night of last Shrove Tuesday, and the girl you carried off to Fat Margot's and held to ransom?

(COLIN DE CAYEULX and CASIN CHOLET gradually rise.)

CASIN CHOLET (starting away from COLIN DE CAYEULX). That was Colin's adventure.

COLIN DE CAYEULX. That was Casin's enterprise.

CASIN CHOLET (going up to COLIN DE CAYEULX). I deplored it.

COLIN DE CAYEULX. I had no hand in it.

VILLON. Stand aside. (They are taken to former positions by two soldiers.) Jehan le Loup.

(JEHAN LE LOUP steps forward without a soldier.)

JEHAN LE LOUP (c., jauntily). At your service.

VILLON. You seem a brisk, assured fellow for a man in duress.

JEHAN LE LOUP. My good conscience sustains me.

VILLON. I am glad to hear it. How did Thevenin Pensete come to his death?

JEHAN LE LOUP. How should I know, my lord?

VILLON. Who better? That nasty quarrel over the cards—the high words and a snatch for the winnings—a tilted table—an extinguished taper—a stab in the dark and a groan. Exit Thevenin Pensete. Your dagger doesn't grow rusty.

JEHAN LE LOUP. My lord, I loved him like a brother.

VILLON. As Cain loved Abel. Stand aside. (JEHAN LE LOUP goes back to his former position. VILLON rises and goes down c.) Now for the girls. Captain——(NOEL LE JOLYS moving forward.) Bring me hither those gentlewoman (from R.).

NOEL (stops suddenly). Gentlewomen, messire—those doxies.

VILLON. They are women, good captain, and you and I are gentlemen, or should be, and must use them gently (going up R.C.).

NOEL (*shrugging his shoulders*). And the demirep in the doublet and hose?

VILLON (*up R.C. VILLON sees HUGUETTE and returns down C.*). Let her stay for the present. (NOEL *signs. The Girls come timidly forward, NOEL moves to R. again after VILLON comes C.*) Well, young ladies, what is this trade of yours that has brought you into trouble?

JEHANNETON. I make the caps that line helmets.

ISABEAU (*curtsy before speaking*). I am a lace weaver (*curtsy*). An honest trade (*curtsy*).

DENISE. I am a slipper maker.

BLANCHE. And I am glover.

GUILLEMETTE. And I a seamstress.

VILLON. No worse and no better. A word in your ear.

(*He whispers something in each girl's ear in turn. As he does so, each girl starts, draws back, looks confused, laughs, and blushes. VILLON whispers to GUILLEMETTE (she runs L.) and then to BLANCHE, who joins her. Then to DENISE, who joins others, to ISABEAU, who joins others and speaks her line. Then to JEHANNETON, who joins rest and speaks. VILLON draws back and talks to NOEL R.C.*)

ISABEAU. A miracle; he reminded me——

JEHANNETON (*down L.C.*) The gentleman is a wizard. Why, he told me——

BLANCHE. Why, he knows——

GUILLEMETTE. And he guessed about——

DENISE. What do you think he said?

(*The Girls speak rapidly together, and laugh after each repeats her story to her friends, each whispering to the other what it is that VILLON has told her. Last laugh is the loudest and VILLON is attracted by the noise and speaks.*)

VILLON (*C.*). Young women (*girls brace up*), young women, the world is a devil of a place for those who are poor. I could preach you a powerful sermon on your follies and frailties, but somehow the words stick in my gullet. Here is a gold coin apiece for you. Go and gather yourselves roses, my roses, to take back to what, Heaven pity you, you call your homes (*gives a handful of money to JEHANNETON*).

JEHANNETON (*L.C.*). Are we free?

VILLON (*C.*). Free? Poor children; such as you are never free. Go and pray Heaven to make men better, for the sake of your daughter's daughters.

(*The Girls exit quietly through L.I.E.*)

VILLON (*up C.*). As for these gentlemen, let them go where they will. (*Rogues surprised, soldiers file up R.C.*) But first give them food and drink and a pocketful of money.

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY (*delighted, moving forward*). Your Excellency is of a most excellent excellence.

GUY TABARIE (*delighted, moving forward*). God save you, sir!

COLIN DE CAYEULX (*delighted, moving forward*). Long live the Grand Constable!

CASIN CHOLET (*delighted, moving forward*). A most rare Constable!

JEHAN LE LOUP (*moving forward*). I kiss your hands.

VILLON. Go your ways, and, if you can, mend them.

NOEL. My Lord, you are the miracle of mercy.

(*The five Rogues run out, L.U.E., snapping fingers at soldiers as they pass; soldiers turn L. and march out L.U.E.; NOEL LE JOLYS notices HUGUETTE as he passes her. She throws rose to him. He exits L.3.E.*)

VILLON (*down R.C.*). Why, in God's name, does the world appear so different to-day? Is it the thing they call the voice of conscience, or merely this purple and fine linen?

(*Coming up C. sees HUGUETTE. He goes to where HUGUETTE is standing, takes her gently by the hand, and draws her down stage.*)

Fair mistress, you have a comely face and you make it very plain that you have a comely figure. (HUGUETTE bows.) Why do you go thus?

HUGUETTE (*L.C., raising herself and slapping his hand away*). For ease and freedom, to please myself, and to show my fine shape to please others.

VILLON (*C.*). Are you a happy woman, mistress?

HUGUETTE (*L.C.*). Happy enough, when fools like you don't clap me into prison for living my life in my own way.

VILLON. I may be a fool, but I did not clap you into prison (*away R.C. a little*). Heaven forbid!

HUGUETTE (*up to him gaily*). Your voice sounds familiar, mon-seigneur. Had I ever the honour to serve you?

VILLON. Who knows?

HUGUETTE (*indifferently and turning up L.C.*). Who cares? What are you going to do with me?

VILLON. Set you free, my delicate bird of prey. Those wild wings were never meant for clipping and caging. (HUGUETTE a step up—pauses, VILLON turns.) Is there anything I can do to pleasure you?

HUGUETTE (*C., earnestly*). What has come to Master François Villon?

VILLON (*R.C.*). Why do you ask?

HUGUETTE. He was with us when we were snared last night. But he did not share our prison, and he is not with us now. Does he live?

VILLON. He lives—he is banished from Paris, but he lives.

HUGUETTE. The sweet saints be thanked !

(Clock strikes.)

VILLON. Why do you care for the fate of this fellow ?

HUGUETTE. As I am a fool, I believe I love him.

VILLON. Heaven's mercy—why ?

HUGUETTE. I cannot tell you, messire. A look in his eyes, a trick of his voice—the something, the nothing that makes a woman's heart run like wax in the fire. He never made woman happy yet, and I'll swear no woman ever made him happy. If you gave him the moon he would want the stars for a garnish. He believes nothing ; he laughs at everything ; he is a false monkey—and yet I wish I had borne such a child.

VILLON. Let us speak no more of this rascal ! He believes more and laughs less than he did. He is so glad to be alive that his forehead scrapes the sky and the stars fall at his feet in gold dust. *(HUGUETTE comes nearer VILLON.)* Paris is well rid of such a jack-anape. *(VILLON, fearing recognition, crosses in front of her to L.C.)*

HUGUETTE. You are a merry gentleman.

VILLON *(up to her R.C.)*. I would be more gentle than merry with you. Will you wear this ring for my sake. *(She takes ring, examines VILLON's hand.)* Fancy that it comes from Master François Villon, who will always think kindly of your wild eyes.

(Re-enter NOEL L.U.E. and coming down R.C.)

HUGUETTE *(quickly)*. Let me see your face.

VILLON. Not so. *(Crossing R.C., draws away.)* Captain, *(HUGUETTE is up stage, watching VILLON)* give this lady honourable conduct. *(NOEL LE JOLYS moves up to R. of HUGUETTE.)*

NOEL *(to HUGUETTE)*. You are a comely girl.

HUGUETTE *(up C.)*. This is news from No-man's land. *(Going.)*

NOEL. *(Following.)* Where do you lodge ?

HUGUETTE. At the sign of the Golden Scull, hard by the Fir Cone *(showing ring to NOEL LE JOLYS)*. Will you visit me ? *(With inviting smile.)*

NOEL. As I am a man I will.

(He goes out, following HUGUETTE L.3.E., leaving VILLON alone.)
Clock strikes half-hour.)

VILLON *(going up C.)*. Heaven forgive me, I am becoming a most pitiful loud preacher. Every rogue there deserves the gallows, but so do I no less, and I have not swallowed enough of this Court air to make me a hypocrite. Well, all this justice is thirsty work *(going to dial, first putting hat down and then taking jug and mug)*, and, mad or sane, sleeping or waking, let me drink while I can.

(Music.) **KATHERINE** appears on the terrace, upper platform, with **OLIVIER LE DAIN**, who points to **VILLON** and comes down to him. **KATHERINE** remains on the terrace.)

VILLON (*at dial, fills a cup of wine and comes down L.C., looking off R.*). To the loveliest lady this side of Heaven. And by Heaven my eyes dazzle, or I believe I see her (*goes up to dial and puts back cup*).

OLIVIER (*down steps*). My lord, there is a lady there who desires to speak with you.

VILLON (L.C.). I desire to speak with her.

OLIVIER (*up c.*). Remember, my lord, that you are the Count of Montcorbier, newly come to court. Forget all else; the King commands it.

VILLON (*going up c.*). The King shall be obeyed. (OLIVIER makes a sign to KATHERINE. OLIVIER goes out.) I am awake. No dream could be as fair as she. (KATHERINE runs down steps and kneels to VILLON.)

KATHERINE (*kneeling, head down*). My lord, will you listen to a distressed lady?

VILLON. Not while the lady kneels. (*Assists her to rise. She looks at him, but there is no sign of recognition. Aside.*) She does not know me.

KATHERINE (R.C.). There is a man in prison this very hour for whom I would beg your clemency. His name is François Villon. Last night he wounded Thibaut d'Aussigny.

VILLON (*c. to down L.C. a step*). Thereby making room for me.

KATHERINE. The penalty is death. But Thibaut was a traitor, sold to Burgundy.

VILLON. Did this Villon fight him for his treason?

KATHERINE. No. He fought him for the sake of a woman. He risked his life with a light heart because a woman willed it.

(*Moves a little to R.*)

VILLON. How do you know all this?

KATHERINE (R.). Because I was the woman. This man had seen me, thought he loved me, sent me verses.

VILLON (C.). How insolent!

KATHERINE. It was insolence—and yet they were very beautiful verses. I was in mortal fear of Thibaut d'Aussigny. I went to this Villon and begged him to kill my enemy. He backed his love-tale with his sword—and now he lies in the shadow of death. It is not just that he should suffer for my sin.

VILLON. Do you, by any chance, love this Villon?

KATHERINE (*turns, with dignity*). I pity him, and I do not want him to die, though indeed life cannot be very dear to him if he could fling it away to please a woman.

(*Turns towards R.*)

VILLON (*going R.C. near her*). Even when you are the woman? If I had stood in this rascal's shoes I would have done as he did for your sake.

KATHERINE. If you think thus, you should grant the poor knave his freedom.

VILLON. That broker of ballads shall go free. Your prayer unshackles him, and we will do no more than banish him from Paris. Forget that such a slave ever came near you.

KATHERINE (*bows low to him*). I shall remember your clemency.

(VILLON *raises KATHERINE and sits her on seat R.*)

VILLON. By Saint Venus, I envy this fellow that he should have won your kind thoughts. For I stand in his case, and I too would die to serve you.

KATHERINE. My lord, you do not know me.

VILLON (*over L. end of seat*). Did he know you? Yet when he saw you he loved you and made bold to tell you so.

KATHERINE. His words were of no more account than the wind in the eaves. But you and I are peers, and the words we change have meanings.

VILLON. Though I be newly come to Paris, I have heard much of the beauty and more of the pride of the Lady Katherine de Vaucelles.

KATHERINE. I am humble enough as to my beauty, but I am very proud of my pride.

VILLON. Would you pity me if I told you that I loved you?

KATHERINE (*rising and going up to dial*). Heaven's mercy! how fast your fancy gallops. I care little to be flattered, and less to be wooed, and I swear that I should be very hard to win.

VILLON. I have more right to try than your taproom bandit. I see what he saw; I love what he loved.

KATHERINE (c.). You are very inflammable.

VILLON (*up R.C.*). My fire burns to the ashes. (KATHERINE *crosses in front of VILLON to the steps R.*) You can no more stay me from loving you than you can stay the flowers from loving the soft air, or true men from loving honour, or heroes from loving glory. I would rake the moon from Heaven for you.

(KATHERINE *is now on third step, VILLON near her.*)

KATHERINE. That promise has grown rusty since Adam first made it to Eve. There is a rhyme in my mind about moons and lovers:

Life is unstable,
Love may uphold;
Fear goes in sable,
Courage in gold.

VILLON (*moving away to C. Aside*).

My rhyme!

KATHERINE.

Mystery covers
Midnight and noon;
Heroes and lovers
Cry for the moon.

VILLON (*away L.C.*). What doggerel!

KATHERINE. Doggerel? 'Tis divinity!

VILLON (*returning to steps*). Tell me what I may do to win your favour.

KATHERINE (*on steps*). A trifle. Save France.

VILLON (*retreating to C.*). No more?

KATHERINE. No less. Are you not Grand Constable, chief of the King's army? There is an enemy at the gates of Paris and none of the King's men can frighten him away. Oh! that a man would come to court. For the man who shall trail the banners of Burgundy in the dust for the King of France to walk on, I may, perhaps, have favours.

VILLON. You are hard to please.

KATHERINE. My hero must have every virtue for his wreath, every courage for his coronet. Farewell. (KATHERINE *makes a movement to go.*)

VILLON (*approaching steps*). Stay, I have a thousand things to say to you.

KATHERINE. I have but one, and 'twas said long since. Farewell! (*Going up a few steps.*)

VILLON. I will follow you.

KATHERINE. You may not. I go to the Queen.

(*She goes out.*)

VILLON. Oh! that a man would come to court! Why should I not deserve her? Last night I was only a poor devil with a rusty sword and a single suit. To-day all's different (*coming from steps to C. and down L.C.*). I am the King's friend, it would seem, a court potentate, a man of mark. What may I not accomplish? This finery smiles like sunlight and the world will warm its hands at me.

(LOUIS *enters from tower, R.I.E.*)

LOUIS (C.). Good afternoon, Lord Constable.

VILLON. Your Majesty!

LOUIS (*touching VILLON's shoulder*). Does power taste well?

VILLON (*kneeling, his back to the audience*). Nobly, sire. On my knees let me thank your Majesty.

LOUIS (*going to dial and sitting*). Nonsense, man; I'm pleasing myself. You sang yourself into splendour. "If Villon were the King of France," eh?

(VILLON *rises and gets R.C.*)

VILLON. Your Majesty will understand—

LOUIS. Perfectly. My good friend, you captivated me! With what a flashing eye, with what a radiant forehead, with what a lofty carriage you thundered your verses at me. "There," said I to myself, "is a real man, a man with a mission; a man who may serve France."

VILLON (c.). Sire, that has been my hunger's dream of plenty.

LOUIS. Well, I couldn't very well make you king, you know, and I wouldn't if I could, for I have a fancy for the task myself. But I owed you a good turn, and your own words prompted the payment. This poor devil shall taste power, I said; I will make him my Grand Constable——

VILLON. Sire, I will serve you as never king was served——

LOUIS. I will make him my Grand Constable for a week.

VILLON (*down R.C.*). For a week, sire?

LOUIS. Good Lord, did your vanity credit a permanent appointment? Come, friend, come, that would be pushing the joke too far!

VILLON. A week!

LOUIS. Even so. One wonderful week. Seven delirious days; one hundred and sixty-eight heavenly hours. It's the chance of a lifetime. The world was made in seven days. (*Rises.*) Seven days of power, seven days of splendour, seven days of love.

VILLON (R.C.) And then go back to the garret and the kennel the tavern and the prison——

LOUIS (*down c. and up with back to audience*). No, no, not exactly. you don't taste the full force of the joke yet. In a week's time you will build me a big gibbet in the Place de Grève, and there your last task as Grand Constable will be to hang Master François Villon.

VILLON (*down R.C. a little.*). Sire, sire, have pity!

LOUIS. Are you so fond of life! are you so poor a thing that you prize your garret and your kennel, your tavern and your prison so highly?

VILLON. I was content yesterday.

LOUIS. Can you be content to-day? Please yourself. There is still a door open to you. You can go back to your garret this very moment if you choose. Say the word and my servants shall strip you of your smart feathers and drub you into the street.

VILLON. Your Majesty, be merciful!

LOUIS. You read Louis of France a lesson, and Louis of France returns the compliment (*down L.C. and up c., back to audience*). I took you for true gold, and I am afraid you are only base metal. You mouthed your longing for the chance to show what you could do. Here is your chance. Take it or leave it. (*Facing front.*) You may have your week of wonder if you wish, but if you do, by my word as a king, you shall swing for it.

VILLON. In God's name, sire, what have I done that you should torture me thus?

LOUIS (*moves down L.C., up c., and then up to R.C. as he speaks*). You

have mocked a king and maimed a minister; you can't get off scot-free. (*Hat off, mumbling over images.*)

VILLON (*coming from R.C. to L.C. and sitting on dial*). Heaven help me! Life, squalid, sordid, but still life, with its tavern corners and its brute pleasures of food and drink and warm sleep; living hands to hold and living laughter to tickle me—or a week of cloth of gold, of glory, of love—and then a shameful death!

LOUIS (*coming down to VILLON and speaking over him*). Pray, friend, pray, to help your judgment!

(OLIVIER LE DAIN *enters* L.U.E. VILLON *still sits on dial*.)

OLIVIER (*bottom of steps up c.*). Sire, the Burgundian herald, Toison d'Or, attends under a flag of truce with a message for your Majesty.

LOUIS (R.C.). We will receive him here, Olivier, in this green audience chamber. We need the free air when we hold speech with Burgundy.

(OLIVIER *goes out* L.U.E. KATHERINE, *attended by* NOEL LE JOLYS *and her* LADIES, *comes on the terrace*. NOEL LE JOLYS *gives her a lute*. LOUIS *sees her, and a thought seems to strike him*. *He advances to where VILLON sits*.)

LOUIS. How if my lady virtue who flouted me could be lured to love this beggar man? (*To VILLON*.) One further chance, fellow. If the Count of Montcorbier win the heart of Lady Katherine de Vaucelles within the week (*VILLON rises*), he shall escape the gallows and carry his lady-love where he pleases.

VILLON (L.C.). On your word of honour, sire?

LOUIS (*with imperial dignity*). My word is my honour, Master François.

(VILLON *picks up his hat from the dial seat and wears it*.)

KATHERINE. (*Sings on the terrace*.)

Life is unstable,
Love may uphold;
Fear goes in sable,
Courage in gold.
Mystery covers
Midnight and noon;
Heroes and lovers
Cry for the moon.

(LOUIS, *grimly smiling, rubbing hands, goes up R.C. and returns to end of flower balustrade by steps*.)

LOUIS (R.C., *after a pause*). Well! (*To VILLON*.) You cried for the moon; I give it to you.

VILLON (*down c.*). And I take it at your hands. Give me my week of wonders, though I die a dog's death at the end of it.

LOUIS. Spoken like a man!

(A fanfare of trumpets is heard.)

(From L.U.E soldiers and knights enter and line the terrace. Others descend the steps O. and take up positions in front of the hedges facing the audience. A company of archers enter and take up position from down L. to up L. behind the dial. OLIVIER enters L.U.E. TOISON D'OR, the Burgundian Herald, enters, accompanied by Burgundian soldiers. The Herald remains for the moment up C. On to the terrace R. come a crowd of Court Ladies together with TRISTAN. NOEL LE JOLYS comes down steps, bows to LOUIS, sneers at VILLON and goes R. The Astrologer enters R.I.E., and stands by NOEL LE JOLYS.)

OLIVIER (L.C. on the steps). The Herald of Burgundy, sire.

(TOISON D'OR moves down the steps to down R.C. as LOUIS speaks the following sentences. VILLON is down L.C.)

TOISON. In the name of the Duke of Burgundy, and of his allies and brothers-in-arms assembled in solemn leaguer outside the walls of Paris, I hereby summon you, Louis of France, to surrender this city unconditionally and to yield in confidence to my master's mercy.

LOUIS (*sitting L.O.*). And if we refuse, Sir Herald?

(All show interest.)

TOISON. The worst disasters of war, fire and sword and famine, much blood to shed (*going down R.*), and much gold to pay, and for yourself no hope of pardon.

(Action from courtiers and knights.)

LOUIS (*sitting*). Great words.

TOISON (*down R.*). The angels of great deeds.

(LOUIS rises, goes O., looks at VILLON and then speaks.)

LOUIS. The Count of Montcorbier, Constable of France, is my counsellor; his voice delivers my mind. (*Close to VILLON.*) Speak, friend, and give this messenger his answer.

VILLON (L.C.). As I will, sire?

LOUIS. Yes, go on, go on. "If Villon were the King of France."

VILLON (*crossing to O.*). Herald of Burgundy, in God's name and the King's, I bid you go back to your master and say this: Kings are great in the eyes of their people, but the people are great in the eyes of God, and it is the people of France who answer you in the name of this epitome. We are well victualled; we are well armed; we lie snug and warm behind our stout walls; we laugh at your leaguer. But when we who eat are hungry, when we who drink are dry, when we who glow are frozen, our answer to rebellious

Burgundy will be the same. We give you back defiance for defiance, menace for menace, blow for blow. This is our answer—this and the drawn sword (*drawing sword*). God and St. Denis for the King of France.

(*All draw and repeat. VILLON stands with drawn sword. TOISON D'OR and two Burgundian soldiers shout "Burgundy," the rest shout "France," Burgundians repeat "Burgundy."* LOUIS sits with one leg crossed over the other, smiling complacently. KATHERINE comes forward and kneels to VILLON.)

KATHERINE (*coming down steps and kneeling in front of VILLON*). My lord, with my lips the women of France thank you for your words of flame.

NOEL (R.). Katherine!

LOUIS (L.C.). Mistress, what does this mean?

KATHERINE (*rising*). It means, sire, that a man has come to court.

(*Music.*)

MEDIUM FAST CURTAIN ON LAST WORD.

ACT III

Sunset. The same scene as Act II under different conditions of light. The time is a red sunset, which deepens into a golden twilight, and merges into a blue and moonlight night.

(When curtain rises, LOUIS is seated with the Queen and Courtiers on the Palace steps, watching dance. After exit of ballet, KING comes down with VILLON and COURTIERS exit into Palace.)

VILLON (*following LOUIS who is walking to dial where he sits and shows a map*). Sire, I have blown it abroad that your Majesty feasts to-night. While the Duke of Burgundy believes us to be carousing we shall make a sortie from St. Anthony's gate. At the cross road some few of us will make an attack upon the enemy's left and beat a retreat. This will tempt him into our ambuscade, and, as I believe, end in his rout. If the Duke of Burgundy falls into my trap men will call me a great captain, yet it is no more than remembering the shape of the meadows where I played in childhood.

LOUIS (*still sitting on dial*). Where did you learn wisdom?

VILLON (*moving away c.*). In the school of hope deferred. When I was—what I was, I still believed that this dingy carcass swaddled a Roman spirit. In the pomp of my pallet I dreamed Olympian dreams. And the dreams have come true.

LOUIS. You are an amazing fellow. Here in a week you have made me more popular than I made myself since my accession. In court, in camp, in council, men are pleased to call you paragon.

VILLON. I am a man of the people, and I know what the people need. A week ago the good people of Paris were disloyal enough. I repeal the tax on wine, and to-day they clap their hands and cry "God save King Louis" lustily. A week ago your soldiers were mutinous because they were ill fed, worse clothed, and never paid at all. I feed them full, clothe them warm, pay them well, and to-day your Majesty has an army that would follow me to the devil if I whistled a marching tune.

LOUIS (*rising c. Pointing to dial*). But in the meantime your sands are running out. Is your heart failing? Is your pulse flagging?

VILLON. Not a whit. I have been translated without discredit from the tavern to the palace, and if the worst come to the worst, I may say with the dying Cæsar, "Applaud me."

LOUIS. You speak as if you had reigned for a century.

VILLON. A man might live a thousand years and yet be no more account at the last than as a great eater of dinners. Whereas to suck all the sweet, and snuff all the perfume but of a single hour, to push all its possibilities to the edge of the chessboard, is to live greatly though it be not to live long, and an end is an end if it come on the winged heels of a week or the dull crutch of a century (*moves a little up R.C.*).

LOUIS. Pray Heaven this philosophy may sound as fine when your neck is in the halter (*crossing R. in front of VILLON*).

VILLON (*L.C., bowing to LOUIS*). Your Majesty's wit and my wish run nose and nose in a leash.

LOUIS (*R.C.*). Messire Noel brings me a new astrologer to-night. The heavens seem in a conspiracy of confusion. My dream of a star falling from heaven defies divination (*going R.*).

VILLON (*C.*). Do you never tire of these sky doctors?

LOUIS (*R.*). Don't jest, Master Poet, but ply your suit, for I swear, if you fail, you shall hang to-morrow.

(*He enters tower, R.I.E.*)

VILLON (*putting hat on balustrade, R.C.*). The petals of my reign are falling from me, full of life, full of colour to the end. Shall I win this woman? (*going C.*) Am I mad to hope it? If I lose, 'tis a short shrift and a long rope at the end of a dazzling dream (*returning R.C.*). How cold the June air seems, and these roses smell of graves! But if I win, how will it be (*sits R.*), I wonder, to marry my heart's desire, to grow old sedately, to live again in the children on my knee, a little François here more honest than his father, a little Katherine there less comely than her mother? (*Rising, getting hat from balustrade and backing to dial.*) Run away, my dear dream-children, to your playground of shadows where you belong, for your father runs the risk of being hanged to-morrow, and he fights for love and life to-night.

(*On the terrace enter KATHERINE, followed by NOEL LE JOLYS, Courtiers and Ladies.*)

NOEL. Lady, I plead for a patient hearing.

KATHERINE. You pray amiss: this is my impatient hour.

NOEL. When, then?

KATHERINE. By and by, when the night is wiser.

NOEL. I will spy upon it.

(*A lady takes lute to VILLON, who is by dial. He refuses, she returns to KATHERINE (who has finished scene with NOEL LE JOLYS) and gives her lute. As KATHERINE approaches C., VILLON comes from dial to meet her. Three ladies come down L.C., and sit on ground C.*)

KATHERINE (*R.C.*). My lord, I am the voice of these ladies. Rhyme us a rhyme that shall match this night of summer.

VILLON. (C.). What shall I rhyme about ?

(*Ladies come down L.C. and R.C. Pages and Knight and Ladies up stage take up positions. NOEL LE JOLYS moves over to L. of stage.*)

KATHERINE (*crossing to dial and sitting*). Your suitors are women ; therefore nothing better nor worse than love.

(VILLON goes to steps by lower balustrade.)

VILLON. Sigh, my lute, sigh.

I wonder in what isle of bliss
Apollo's music fills the air ;
In what green valley Artemis
For young Endymion spreads the snare ;
Where Venus lingers debonair :
The wind has blown them all away—
And Pan lies piping in his lair—
Where are the gods of yesterday ?

Say where the great Semiramis
Sleeps in a rose-red tomb ; and where
The precious dust of Cæsar is,
Or Cleopatra's yellow hair ;
Where Alexander Do-and-Dare :
The wind has blown them all away—
And Redbeard of the Iron Chair—
Where are the dreams of yesterday ?

(NOEL LE JOLYS crosses from L. 3 E. to R. 3 E., pausing at balustrade before exiting.)

Where is the Queen of Herod's kiss,
And Phryne in her beauty bare ;
By what strange sea does Tomyris
With Dido and Cassandra share
Divine Proserpina's despair :
The wind has blown them all away—
For what poor ghost does Helen care ?
Where are the girls of yesterday ?

Alas for lovers ! pair by pair
The wind has blown them all away,
The young and yare, the fond and fair :
Where are the snows of yesterday ?

KATHERINE (*softly, to herself*). Where are the snows of yesterday ?

VILLON. Sweet ladies, my song is sung. (VILLON assists ladies to rise. The others follow and get R.C. by steps.) Yesterday is dead, to-morrow comes never. (To KATHERINE by dial) Let us live

and love to-day. (*To ladies who are on steps*) Shall we go to the great hall where the Italian players gambol?

(*Ladies and Courtiers exit and four Pages line steps (two on either side) for VILLON to pass through. VILLON is up the steps when KATHERINE's line stops him.*)

(*As VILLON is exiting, THIBAUT, disguised as a pilgrim, enters L.I.E. He sees VILLON and KATHERINE and exits L.U.E., but not before KATHERINE has recognized him.*)

KATHERINE (*up c. steps*). My lord?

VILLON (*coming down R. steps*). My lady?

KATHERINE (*up L.C.*). This masking kindles fancies. I thought but now that the eyes of Thibaut d'Aussigny glared on me from under a pilgrim's hood.

VILLON (*up c.*). A villainous apparition. For the news is that he lies dead in the camp of Burgundy.

KATHERINE (*coming down stage to dial*). I always hated him—almost feared him. If he be dead I hope he will not haunt me. Ah! I tingle to-night like a lute that is tuned too high.

VILLON (*c.*). Will you watch the players?

KATHERINE. No, I am more in a mood for moonlight than candle-light (*sits L.C.*).

VILLON. May I ask you a question?

KATHERINE. Surely.

VILLON (*R.C.*). Are you content with me?

KATHERINE. You have done much.

VILLON. I have more to do. For seven days I have wrestled with greatness as Jacob wrestled with the angel; I have made the King popular, the Parisians loyal, the army faithful.

KATHERINE. Then why do you linger here where courtiers feast and ladies dance?

VILLON. I want the Duke of Burgundy to believe that the King's favourite is a zany and the King's court an orgy, where the King's honour melts like a pearl in a pot of vinegar. But our swords are tempered in wine and sharpened to dance music (*a little R.C.*), and to-night we ride.

KATHERINE (*rising and moving close to him*). I would I were a man that I might ride with you?

VILLON. I ride in your honour. (*VILLON takes KATHERINE's hand.*) Heaven has been very good to me, and I serve France serving you. (*KATHERINE withdraws her hand and slowly moves L.C.*) Perhaps I serve both for the last time.

KATHERINE (*L.C.*). For the last time?

VILLON (*up c.*). Even so, my sweet lady Echo. Those far-away lanterns warn me that I may die to-morrow. Some of us will be dreaming their last dreams by sunrise. I may be one of those heavy sleepers.

KATHERINE. You may die if you ride on the King's business

(*turning away L.O.*) but so may I who sit at home and eat my heart.

VILLON (*coming down c. a little*). For whom?

KATHERINE (*attempting to cross*). I will tell you that to-morrow.

VILLON (*staying her, takes her L. hand in his R.*). There is no time like now time. (*Pointing to dial.*) That dial there is as wise as the wisest.

(*Drawing KATHERINE to dial and releasing her, then reading from the dial. KATHERINE stands looking at the dial, her back to audience.*)

Observe how fast time hurries past,
Then use each hour while in your power;
For comes the sun, but time flies on,
Proceeding ever, returning never.

KATHERINE (*sits L.C.*). This was old wisdom when Noah sailed the seas.

VILLON (*c.*). Well, let to-morrow tell to-morrow's story. To-night I feel like a happy child in a world of make-believe. To-night we are immortal, you and I, wandering for ever in this green garden under those indifferent stars, breathing this rose-scented air, spelling the secret of the world.

KATHERINE. You may say what you please—to-morrow.

VILLON. Alas, no! To-morrow I shall be mortally sober; to-night I am divinely drunk—drunk with star wine, flower wine, song wine. The stars burn my brain; the roses pierce my flesh; the songs trouble my soul (*approaching KATHERINE*). To-night if I dared I would ease my heart.

KATHERINE. You may say what you please to-night (*giving him her hand.*)

VILLON (*taking her hand*). If I were to die to-morrow I would tell you this to-night. I love you. (*Kneeling.*) These are easy words to say, yet my heart fails as I say them, for their meaning is as full and musical as the Bell of Doom (*rising*). Men are such fools that they have but one name for a thousand meanings, and beggar the poor love word to base kitchen usages and work-a-day desires. But I would keep it holy for the flame which it sometimes pleases Heaven to light in one heart for the worship of another, I never knew what love was till I saw a girl's face on a May morning, and wisdom stripped the rind from my naked heart. The God in me leaped into being to greet the God in your eyes. I love you. This is what I would say if I were to die to-morrow.

(*There is a long pause.*)

KATHERINE (*rising and going to him*). If you were to die to-morrow I might tell you this much to-night. A woman may love a man because he is brave, or because he is comely, or because he is

wise, or gentle—for a thousand, thousand reasons (*close up to VILLON*). But the best of all reasons for a woman loving a man is just because she loves him, without rhyme and without reason (*getting away a step*), because Heaven wills it, because earth fulfils it, (*taking his hand*) because his hand is of the right size to hold her heart in its hollow.

(*Pressing his hand in hers.*)

VILLON (*embraces her*). Katherine!

(NOEL LE JOLYS *appears on terrace and comes down as they are walking up to dial.*)

NOEL (*on step*). Where are the lovers of yesterday?

VILLON (C.). Your pink and white ladybird. Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home.

NOEL (R.C., *up to VILLON*). My lord, I will measure word and sword with you at any season, but now I seek promised speech with this lady (*getting away R.*).

VILLON (R.C.). While I have better business in hand you shall know only the smooth of my tongue and the flat of my falchion. Compass your swelling heart lest you play the lion before a lady.

(NOEL LE JOLYS *goes down R.*)

KATHERINE (C., *to VILLON*). My lord, he has importuned me for audience. I will speak with you again ere you ride.

VILLON. We ride at ten, remember. Meanwhile I will busy myself with my last will and testament.

(*To NOEL LE JOLYS, who is crossing up to R.C.*)

To Messire Noel I bequeath
A helmless ship, a houseless street,
A wordless book, a swordless sheath,
To make his nothingness complete.

(NOEL LE JOLYS *goes up R.C.*)

KATHERINE (C.). Do you leave me nothing?

VILLON (R.C.). The stars should be your pearls upon a string,
The world a ruby for your finger-ring;
And you should have the sun and moon to wear
If I were King.

(VILLON *goes out L.I.E.* *She follows him.*)

KATHERINE (L.). Well, sir?

NOEL (*who is coming down stage*). I have always to seek you nowadays.

KATHERINE (*going C.*). The world is not yet so old that the wooing must be done by women.

NOEL (R.C.). I am out of favour since a fellow from nowhere plays the fool in high places.

KATHERINE (C.). I do not hate you for railing at him, but it does not help me to love you.

NOEL (R.C.). You have outgrown me.

KATHERINE (C.). My soul was in bud a week ago. To-day it is in blossom.

NOEL (R.C.). God have mercy, what can this fellow do that is denied to me? Can he stride a horse, or fly a hawk better? Show a brighter sword in quarrel or tune a smother lute in calm? Can he out-dance me, out-drink me, out-courtier me, out-soldier me? (*Crossing to L.*) No, no no. (*KATHERINE goes from C. to the steps and pauses on second step.*) And must I now believe that he can out-love me?

KATHERINE (*on steps*). When a man comes to court it is worth while to be a woman. You will learn that some day, sir Noel, if you grow to be a man.

(*Going out up steps.*)

NOEL (*approaching C. and turning down L.C.*). Why are the women all sunflowers to this scaramouch? Well, I shall be revenged if my astrologer plays his part and tells the weak King that this Count of Montcorbier is his evil spirit.

(*Clock strikes.*)

(*HUGUETTE enters L.U.E. She is wearing a pilgrim's gown over her boy's dress.*)

HUGUETTE (*speaks in a man's voice and touching NOEL LE JOLYS on shoulder*). May I vend you an indulgence, good gentleman?

NOEL (*moving up to her C. and backing her to R.C.*). Pass your ways, pilgrim. I am in no mood for motley.

HUGUETTE (R.C.). Are you in a maid's mood or a mood for a maid?

NOEL (C.). Are you pandar as well as pilgrim? I wait for a woman.

HUGUETTE (R.C.). Is she tall or short; young or old; dark or fair; sweet or sour? (*Getting to seat R.*)

NOEL. She is of the colour of the chameleon; of the age of the ancient world; of the height of any man's heart, and as bitter-sweet as a crushed quince.

(*About to go out L.I.E.*)

HUGUETTE (*throwing herself full length on seat. In her own voice. Unhooding*). Is she of my feet, favour, years, and savour?

NOEL (*running to her, R.C., surprised*). You are welcome, witch, for you bring the best love in the world.

(*To her, about to embrace her.*)

HUGUETTE (*pushes him off and comes c.*). Hush, I am no love-monger, now, no gallantry girl, but a most politic plotter. We have an astrologer for your King. Will Louis come?

NOEL (c.). As linnet to looking-glass. He is greedy of star wisdom. Does your astrologer know his lesson?

HUGUETTE (c.). He is parrot-perfect. When all is quiet give an owl's cry thrice and René will bring him. He will warn the King against his Grand Constable, and commend Messire Noel le Jolys.

(*Bowing to him.*)

NOEL (c.). Then I shall be king of the castle, and you shall have a great gold chain and pearls as big as a virgin's tears.

HUGUETTE (L.C., *scornfully*). You know the way to win a woman.

NOEL. I am no jingling rhyme-broker, I thank Heaven. I pay my way.

(*Tries to embrace HUGUETTE.*)

HUGUETTE (*avoiding him*). I will kiss you when you win.

NOEL. You are indeed a politician. (*Clock strikes three quarters.*) I must wait on the King.

(*He goes out by the door R.I.E. Throws kisses to her before exiting.*)

HUGUETTE (*after him*). Fool, dunce, dolt, ass, peacock, buzzard, owl. (*Up to seat R., taking lute up.*) The world is as sour as a rotten orange since François went into exile.

(*She sits R., takes up VILLON's lute and begins to thrum it.*)

VILLON enters L.I.E.)

VILLON. (*Sees HUGUETTE.*) There's another of these pilgrims.

(*VILLON touches HUGUETTE on the shoulder. She springs to her feet and turns to him.*)

VILLON (R.C.). Hail, little brother!

HUGUETTE (*rising R., disguised voice*). Hail, little sister!

VILLON (R.C.). Why little sister?

HUGUETTE (R.C.). If I am a brother of yours, you must need be a sister of mine. But you talk out of the litany.

(*About to go c.*)

VILLON. What harm if you give me responses?

HUGUETTE. I will give you no more than good-bye.

(*Catching hold of lute and trying to see HUGUETTE's face. In the attempt VILLON turns HUGUETTE round to c. in front of him.*)

VILLON (*stops her*). You shall not show me your heels till I show myself your face. (*He suddenly unhoods her and starts in surprise.*) Huguette!

HUGUETTE (*mysteriously approaching him*). Who are you ?

(*She looks closely in his face, then slowly recognizes him.*)

HUGUETTE (*drawing him to c.*). François, you dear devil. (*Embraces him.*) Where have you been this thousand years ? They said you were banished. How brave you are. (*VILLON puts hand over HUGUETTE's mouth.*) Where did you steal so much splendour ? (*backs her towards dial, R.C.*) Are you cutting purses ? Are you plucking mantles ?

VILLON (*near seat*). What are you doing here, Abbess ?

HUGUETTE (*sitting*). The fair fool Noel has taken a fancy to me Oh, I have missed you so much. Kiss me.

(*Tries to draw him to the seat beside her.*)

VILLON. You should keep your kisses for the fair fool Noel.

HUGUETTE. Has some great lady bewitched you ?

VILLON. What are you doing here, Abbess ?

HUGUETTE (*kneeling to VILLON, in front of him*). Ah me, I cannot shut the door of my heart in your smooth face.

VILLON. Well ?

HUGUETTE. René de Montigny has a great game afoot, and you are back in time to share it.

VILLON (*sitting on seat vacated by HUGUETTE*). What game ?

HUGUETTE (*kneeling to VILLON*). Why, the fair fool Noel, deceived by me, has persuaded the King to see an astrologer here to-night when all is quiet. Noel believes that the astrologer will advise the King to fling his Grand Constable out of the window and call Messire Noel in at the door. But we really mean to kidnap the King and sell him to the Duke of Burgundy.

VILLON (*still sitting L.C.*). A great game. And who is this astrologer ?

HUGUETTE. Thibaut d'Aussigny, who pretends to be dead, but who lives for this revenge.

VILLON. Then it was he.

HUGUETTE. Noel is to give us the signal by crying an owl's cry thrice.

VILLON (*rising and going c.*). Here is a chance in a thousand.

HUGUETTE (*sitting on floor*). What are you thinking of ?

VILLON (*going up R.C. and down c. to dial, speaking to himself*). I have but to close my eyes and shut my ears and the good Thibaut carries the good Louis to the good Burgundy to-night, and there can be no hanging to-morrow.

(*As VILLON approaches dial, HUGUETTE rises and gets R.C.*)

HUGUETTE. What are you talking about ?

VILLON (*unheeding her*). If they cut Gaffer Louis's throat between them the world were rid of a crook-witted king and I free to win Katherine, hold Paris, be the first man in France—

HUGUETTE (*R.C.*). François, speak to me.

VILLON (*leaning against dial*). One would say I were a fool to let such occasion slip through my ten commandments. But I have learned a thing called honour, which I must not lose for the sake of my lady.

HUGUETTE (*up to him and shaking him*). François! François!

VILLON (*down c. together*). Yes, child, yes.

HUGUETTE. What does it matter to you what they do with the fool King?

VILLON. I have a mind to play my part in this enterprise. I am the King of the Cockleshells, and I have returned to authority. Give me your pilgrim's gown, girl (*in taking off cloak, HUGUETTE gets in front of him*), and, mind, not a word to the brotherhood (*going up stage together*). I want to take friend Thibaut by surprise. Hide among the roses till the sport begins.

(HUGUETTE, *throwing a kiss to VILLON, runs out L.U.E.*)

VILLON (*coming down stage*). How does the balance go? In the one hand a great king's life; in the other a poor poet's honour. King, beggar, beggar, king. (*Making gesture of balancing.*) Katherine! (NOEL LE JOLYS *enters from R. I. E. and is R.O. when VILLON sees him.*) Ah, Messire Noel, a word in your ear. The king is in danger, you are deceived, I want your help.

(*Taking NOEL LE JOLYS by the ear, he draws him inside tower and closes door, and stage is empty for a few seconds. Then NOEL LE JOLYS comes out of the tower and goes up c. speaking line—*

NOEL. They have befooled me, but they shall not beknave me; now for an owl's cry to catch the traitor.

(*Afterwards giving owl's cry; then withdraws into tower. Enter slowly from different directions, COLIN DE CAYEULX, CASIN CHOLET, GUY TABARIE, JEHAN LE LOUP, RENÉ DE MONTIGNY, and THIBAUT D'AUSSIGNY, disguised as pilgrims.*)

THIBAUT (C.). Are we all here?

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY (R.). Ay, and ready to gather the royal rose of this garden.

THIBAUT (C.). I tell you, friend, when I fold my fingers about that yellow neck of his, I would not change names with an emperor. That grip of mine means France for Burgundy, Paris and Katherine for me. Who is the fool that usurps my office?

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY (R.). No one knows. He dropped from the tree of Fortune like a ripe plum.

THIBAUT. Keep close.

LOUIS (*heard off R.*). Messire Noel, where is that new ast ologer?

(*All conceal themselves except THIBAUT and RENÉ DE MONTIGNY.*)

(*From postern door NOEL LE JOLYS enters, followed by VILLON, disguised as LOUIS. HUGUETTE enters L.U.E., and conceals herself at back of dial.*)

NOEL (*coming up R.C. to C. with VILLON*). Is the star-gazer here?

(NOEL LE JOLYS *withdraws into R.I.E.*)

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY (*up R.*). Ay, he is the wonder of the world. He can read the stars more easily than a tapster the score on his shutter. He can spell you the high luck and the low. Bohemian, Egyptian, Arabian wisdom have no mysteries for him.

(NOEL LE JOLYS *goes back into castle, R. 1 E.* CASIN CHOLET and COLIN DE CAYEULX *enter R. 3 E., and stand down R.C.* GUY TABARIE and JEHAN LE LOUP *enter R. 2 E. and L. 2 E. respectively and stand up L.C.* VILLON *comes to THIBAUT in silence.* THIBAUT *takes LOUIS by the wrist down stage.* During scene VILLON *is silent, only suggesting by action that he is LOUIS.*)

THIBAUT (*pushing VILLON on his knees*). Sire, I can decipher your destiny. Do not speak, or I will kill you. (*Shows dagger, from which VILLON shrinks.* RENÉ DE MONTIGNY *comes round front of VILLON from up R. to L.C.*). I am Thibaut d'Aussigny, sire, whom you thought to be dead, but who lives to prison you. (*The Conspirators gather round.*) You are in the toils. Silent you are still a man; give tongue and you are simple carrion. You must come to the knees of Burgundy. You shall be the Duke's footstool. (*VILLON's actions indicate extreme terror.* NOEL LE JOLYS and OLIVIER *enter R. 3 E., NOEL LE JOLYS quietly crossing to L. down stage and OLIVIER on steps R.C. ready to pick up VILLON's cloak and hat.* He *puts them R. of steps.*) Can a king be such a cur? (*VILLON kneeling on ground, rocking to and fro.*) Stop crying!

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY (L.C.). He seems to me to be laughing.

THIBAUT (C.). Laughing!

(*VILLON rises and gives way to a hearty peal of laughter.* As THIBAUT *stares at him, postern door R. 1 E. opens and TRISTAN comes out.*)

TRISTAN (R.). The King!

(*The garden is surrounded by archers and soldiers, who bar all the exits.* THIBAUT *stands L., held by two archers, astonished as LOUIS comes out of the tower.*)

LOUIS (R.C.). Well, my Lord Constable?

(CASIN CHOLET and COLIN DE CAYEULX *run from R.C. and are captured by soldiers up L.C.*)

VILLON (C., *pointing mockingly at THIBAUT*)—

“His counsellors are rogues perdie,
While men of honest mind are banned.”

THIBAUT (*going R.C.*). You shall laugh no more.

(*He springs at VILLON with dagger, but is intercepted by HUGUETTE,*

who flings herself upon VILLON and is stabbed. THIBAUT dashes away from soldiers to R.U.E., and goes out followed by soldiers and NOELLE JOLYS crying, "Kill him! Kill him!" The conspirators are seized and their pilgrim gowns removed. VILLON bears HUGUETTE to dial. OLIVIER attends her.)

HUGUETTE. Let me alone—I'm done for!

VILLON. Courage, Abbess, courage, lass. That anyone should die for me!

HUGUETTE. This is a strange end (*sinking on to floor*). I always thought I should die in a bed. Here is another kind of battlefield. Give me drink.

OLIVIER. Some water?

HUGUETTE. Not water. Wine. I have ever loved the taste of it, and 'tis too late to change now. (*OLIVIER brings wine. To VILLON.*) You give it to me. (*VILLON does so.*) Your health. I suppose I have been a great sinner. Will God forgive me?

VILLON. He understands his children.

HUGUETTE. You always were hopeful. Many men have loved me, only one ever took my heart—(*Holds out her arms.*) Give me your lips.

Daughters of Pleasure, one and all,
Use your red lips before too late;
Love ere love flies beyond recall. Ah!

(*Falls head down stage.*)

(*OLIVIER beckons soldiers down. LOUIS sends TRISTAN to look after body. TRISTAN puts his hat on and follows HUGUETTE's body with OLIVIER.*)

VILLON (L.C.). Heaven, have mercy.

(*VILLON stands silent.*)

LOUIS (*coming up R.C.*). Are you so dashed by the death of a wanton?

VILLON (*approaching c.*). She had God's breath in her body, sire. I was John-a-nods for a moment, now I am a Jack-a-deeds again. The hour for battle is at hand.

LOUIS (c.). You have done me a good turn, gossip, and may ask any grace of me—except your life. (*Re-enter OLIVIER and TRISTAN, who stand up R.C.*) That depends on your lady.

VILLON. Sire, grant me the lives of these rascals. They will ride with me and fight for France.

(*The Rogues are released and go up back, where they wait, talking among themselves. Exeunt Archers through tower door, one closing door after him.*)

LOUIS (L.C.). Here comes your lady. I think your love-fruit is ripe and you need not stand on tiptoe to pick it.

(KATHERINE appears on the terrace.)

VILLON (c.). Sire, I believe I have won the rose of the world.

LOUIS. The Count of Montcorbier is luckier than François Villon. But the lady has a high mind and a fierce spirit. She may not relish the deception, pardon the cheat his lie!

VILLON. Cheat, lie? Sire, those words fling me from my fool's paradise. I have been a demi-god for a week, but she shall know the simple mortal.

LOUIS. Please yourself. Win her or swing; either way contents me. (*Goes up R.O. between OLIVIER and TRISTAN.*)

VILLON. Katherine.

KATHERINE (*coming down steps to VILLON c. and offering him a scarf*). Wear this with my prayers. With it I give you my hand and my heart. You shall carry my plighted troth with you into the battle (*dragging him down to seat R.*). Let me tell my love to all the world.

VILLON. Wait, wait, you must say no more until you know me.

KATHERINE (*sitting R.*). Do I not know you?

VILLON. Look in my face—look well. Do you see nothing there that reminds you of other hours?

KATHERINE. Of happy hours in this rose garden.

VILLON (R.O.). No, no, of a dark night, a tavern, a cloaked woman, a sordid fellow drowsing sottishly by the fire, a prayer, a love-tale and a promise, a crowd of bullies and wantons, a quarrel, a fight with sword and lantern in the dark, a breast-knot of ribbon flung from a gallery.

KATHERINE (*rising*). What are you trying to tell me?

VILLON. Here is the knot of ribbon which you flung to me in the Fir Cone tavern (*kneeling*). Oh, Katherine, pity me, I am François Villon.

KATHERINE. I can hear what you say, but it makes no mark upon my brain.

VILLON (R.O.). I am François Villon who served you with his sword, who praised you with his pen, and who loves you with all his soul.

KATHERINE. It isn't true (*crossing to c. behind VILLON*), it isn't true. I don't believe you.

(LOUIS comes down L.O.)

VILLON. Whatever my fate, you must know the truth. (*To Rogues. TRISTAN comes down L.*) Guy, René, all of you, come here. Look at me—closer, closer. (*They gather round him. OLIVIER comes to up L.C.*) Don't you know François Villon in spite of this new spirit shining in his eyes?

(*The Rogues recognize him, clasp his hands, etc.*)

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. François.

GUY TABARIE. François.

KATHERINE. Sire, sire, is this true ?

LOUIS (L. of her). Most true, pretty mistress. You disdained me for this.

KATHERINE. Pitiful traitor, why did you live this lie ?

VILLON. I loved you.

KATHERINE. Do not shame the sweet word. I hate you. To think the face that I have learned to love should mask so base a heart. You have stolen my love like a thief ; you have crucified my pride. I hate you. Go back to the dregs and lees of life, skulk in your tavern, forget, what I shall never forget, that so base a thing as you ever came near me.

LOUIS. Is this the course of true love ?

(She starts at sound of KING's voice.)

KATHERINE. Sire, you have wreaked a royal revenge upon a woman (*pause*). There are no tears in my eyes yet, but I pray they will come that I may weep myself clean of this memory.

LOUIS. I am afraid you will hang to-morrow, Master Villon.

VILLON. I should be glad to greet the gallows now, but I have a deed to do before I die. (*Clock begins to strike ten. Going to KATHERINE.*) I dreamed that love through which I have been born again could lift me to your lips. The dream is over. But you bade me serve France, and I ride and fight for you to-night.

(Enter from steps Knights, Courtiers, Ladies, who take places on steps. From L.U.E. four Pages with VILLON's armour, and Soldiers, who form in double rank back stage. From L. 2 E. Archers and Captain. Monks enter from L.U.E., one carrying the Oriflamme.)

VILLON. Comrades ! Let each man carry himself to-night as if the fate of France depended upon his heart, his arm, his courage. Strike for the mothers that bore you, the wives that comfort you, the children that renew you—the women that love you. Forward in God's name and the King's !

(Huzzah from all. VILLON repeats "In God's name and the King's.")

MEDIUM FAST CURTAIN ON LOUD CHEERS AND HUZZAHS FROM ALL.

ACT IV

An open place in Paris. Quaint, old-fashioned houses, with gables, overhanging windows, and fantastic signs. At back, a great archway with statues in niches on either side. At left, entrance to ancient Gothic church with steps leading up to it, and adorned with paintings and gilded images of saints. On same side higher up, a dais for the King and Court, covered with purple velvet, powdered with golden fleurs-de-lis. A newly erected gallows, with platform and steps.

(When the curtain rises, TROIS ECHELLES and PETIT JEAN are discovered drinking at foot of gallows. TROIS ECHELLES is tall, thin, grave, in sad-coloured clothes, and wearing a large rosary. PETIT JEAN is a plump, jolly, spry little fellow, brightly dressed, and with a merry, roguish manner that contrasts with the lugubriousness of TROIS ECHELLES.)

JEAN *(giving him jug, rises)*. Drink and be merry.

ECHELLES *(drinking and sighing)*. I will drink, but I cannot be merry. I have lost heart. I tell you I haven't hanged a man for a week.

JEAN *(looking off R.U.E.)*. All Paris is on the walls watching the battle. Lucky Paris.

ECHELLES. Not so lucky if we don't win the battle.

(MOTHER VILLON enters, L.U.E.)

JEAN. Good morrow to your night-cap, mother. Have you found your lost sheep?

MOTHER. They say he is banished; but he has sent me money, bless him! though I touch none of it, lest it be badly come by.

ECHELLES *(sanctimoniously, crossing to C.)*. Give it to me, to spend on masses.

JEAN. Lend it to me for drink-money.

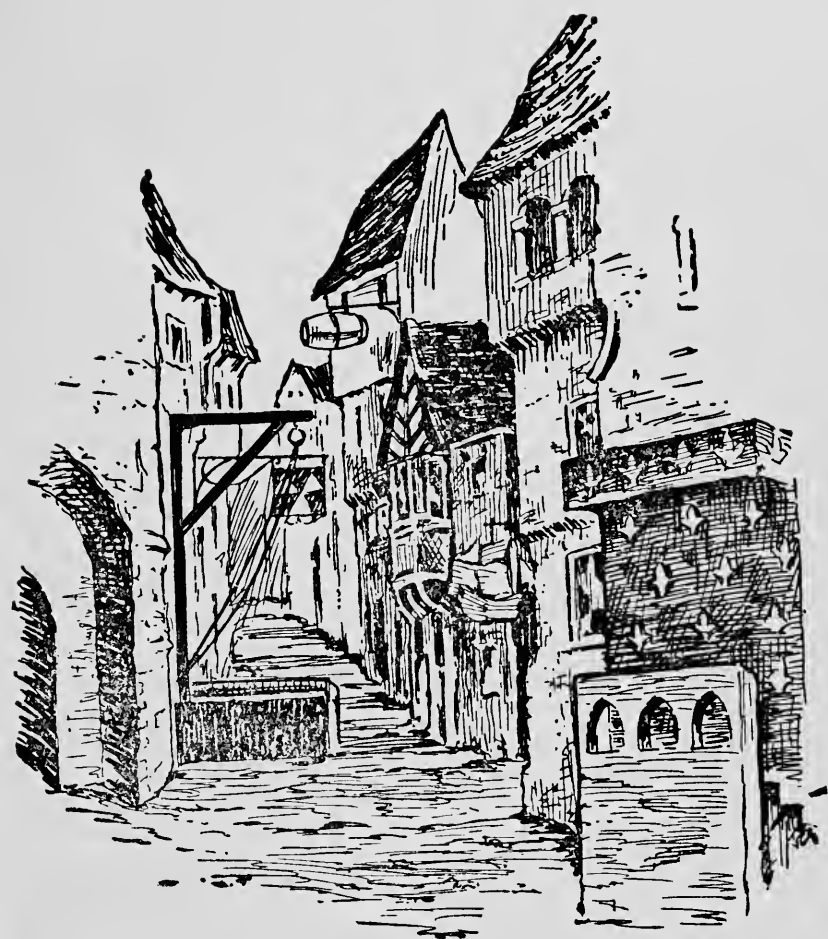
MOTHER. For whom do you build this gallows?

ECHELLES. Oddly enough, we don't know. Make me a gallows here, says the Constable, in the open place, and sieges for the King and his courtiers.

(MOTHER VILLON goes into the church.)

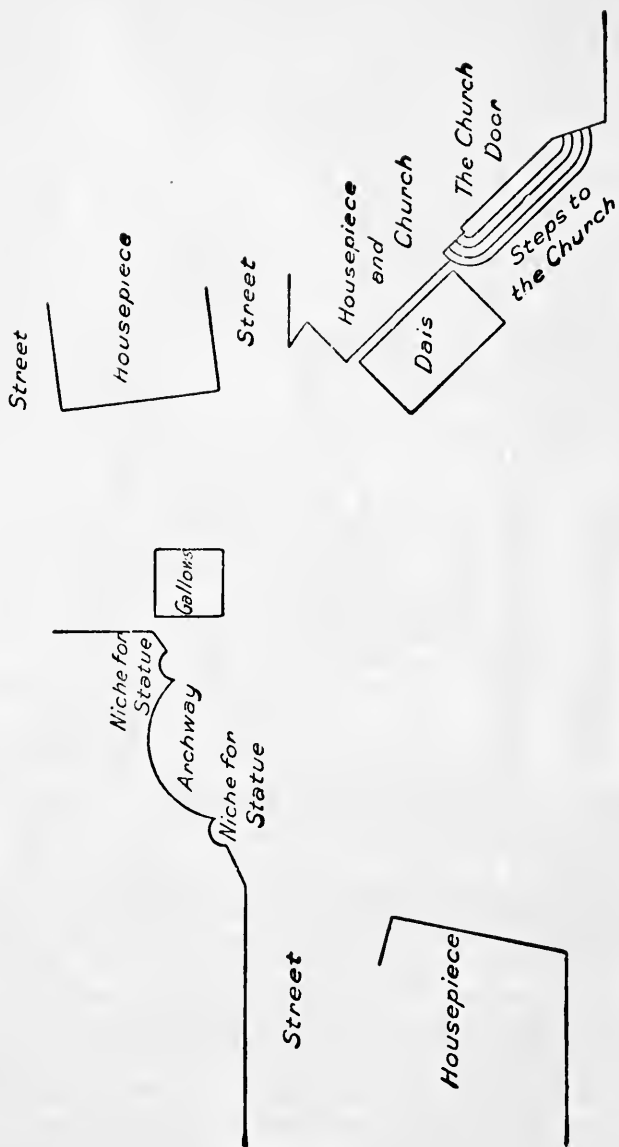
JEAN *(yawning)*. I'll to sleep and dream of hanging a king.

(Up stage, C.)



ACT IV

Housepiece



ECHELLES (*turning to him, R.*). Treason, friend, if Tristan heard you.

JEAN (*going up stage*). Well, let's say an archbishop.

ECHELLES. An archbishop ought to make a good end.

(*They ascend platform and compose themselves to slumber.*)

(KATHERINE enters, followed by NOEL LE JOLYS, L. 3 E.; *they come down stage*).

KATHERINE. Why do you follow me?

NOEL. You should not walk unguarded. Therefore I shadow you.

KATHERINE. You may well play the shadow, for you cast no shadow of your own. The streets are very idle—the streets are very quiet. I would sooner have my loneliness than your company. Let me go to my prayers.

NOEL (*between her and church*). For your lover?

KATHERINE. You have a small mind to ask, yet I have a great mind to answer. My prayers are for a brave gentleman, whom I shall never see again. (*Crosses R.*)

NOEL. I am a brave gentleman. I slew Thibaut d'Aussigny last night. The King has taken me back into favour—cannot you do the like?

KATHERINE. No, for you envy a great spirit, and your envy makes you a base thing.

NOEL. He is no man-angel! He is made of Adam's clay like the rest of us.

KATHERINE. My pride has the right to hate him, but he is still my soul's man.

(*Enter LOUIS, followed by TRISTAN and OLIVIER, from church, L. 1 E.*)

LOUIS (*on last step*). Good morning, friends.

NOEL. Sire.

KATHERINE (C.). Your Majesty.

LOUIS (*moving to NOEL*). Take the top of your speed to St. Anthony's gate, and bring hot news of the battle.

(*Exit NOEL LE JOLYS, R.U.E.*)

KATHERINE (*about to go into church*). Have I your Majesty's leave—

LOUIS. Are you so hungry for your devotions that you cannot waste some worldly words on me? Are you still angry with me for the trick I played on you?

KATHERINE. It is wasted spirit to be angry with a king.

LOUIS. You are as pat with your answers as a clerk at matins. Could you give me your heart now, if I bent my knee?

KATHERINE. I lost my heart last night. I have not found it again.

LOUIS. The fellow was a fool to blab so glibly. I would have

carried the jest farther, but he stood on the punctilio, and would not win you without confession.

KATHERINE. I am glad he had so much honour.

LOUIS. Can you forgive him ?

KATHERINE. Sire, in the long white night of my sleepless sorrow I have learned rather to ask than to grant forgiveness. However his wheel of life may spin, his spirit is too great for mine to disdain it. My pride is drowned in a sea of tears. May Heaven pity him and me !

LOUIS. If you wait in the church for his home-coming, you will see how the jest ends.

(KATHERINE *curtsys and goes into the church, L. 1 E.* MOTHER VILLON comes out at the same time, *curtsys to her and crosses stage, curtsying to LOUIS, and exit R.U.E.* Meantime TRISTAN and OLIVIER advance R. and L. of LOUIS.)

LOUIS (*looking after KATHERINE*). There goes a brave lady, gossips ; a fair lady ; a chaste lady. She sails in the high latitudes of love, and deserves to find the Fortunate Islands. Are there not better things to do with Master Villon than to hang him ?

OLIVIER (L.). This Villon is such a damnable double-dealer that the ass-headed populace love him better than you.

LOUIS (C.). That is enough to hang him. Yet I have a kind of liking for his courage and his tinkling wit. And my dream troubles me—the star that fell from Heaven.

TRISTAN (R.). Hang the rascal while you can, and thank Heaven you are well rid of him.

OLIVIER (*up L.C.*). The people are coming from the walls.

TRISTAN (*down R.*). The Queen, sire !

(The QUEEN enters in litter, attended by Ladies and Courtiers. LOUIS advances towards her. Takes her by the hand and conducts her to her place on the dais. The ladies and gentlemen of the court range themselves in their benches. The Scottish Archers rank themselves at the sides of the royal inclosure. Stragglers begin to enter, and to occupy the right of the stage. TROIS ECHELLES and PETIT JEAN have awakened and lean over the handrail of the platform of the gallows surveying the scene. NOEL LE JOLYS enters and advances towards the KING. Shouts are heard.)

NOEL (C.). Sire, my Lord the Grand Constable returns in triumph. (*Louder shouts.*) You can hear his music now.

LOUIS (*down L.*). It is very well.

(LOUIS takes his place on the dais next to the QUEEN. The crowd begin to come running in, shouting and cheering. The noise of military music and the tramp of marching men is heard approaching louder and louder. The people throng the right of the stage, flinging flowers on the ground. Conspicuous in the crowd are JEHANNETON, DENISE, BLANCHE, ISABEAU, and GUILLEMETTE.)

(*Soldiers enter through archway at back and form a line at right to keep the people behind them. People appear at the windows. An open space is preserved in the centre, and into this space, when the cheering is at its shrillest and the rain of flowers thickest, VILLON rides in through the gateway, followed by soldiers, who fill up back of stage. VILLON leaps from his horse, advances towards the dais and salutes the KING and QUEEN. VILLON is closely followed by the five rogues, who are wrapped in Burgundian banners. NOEL LE JOLYS advances indignantly.*)

NOEL (*coming up from L.*). In Heaven's name, sir, who are these scarecrows who dare to flaunt their rags in the presence of the King ?

VILLON. These scarecrows are rogues who have fought like gentlefolk, and these rags are the banners of the enemy.

LOUIS (L.). Well answered.

VILLON (C.). Louis of France, we bring you these silks for your carpet. An hour ago they wooed the wind from Burgundian staves and floated over Burgundian helmets. I will make no vainglory of their winning. Burgundy fought well, but France fought better, and these trophies trail in our triumph. When we here, who breathe hard from fighting, and ye, who stand there and marvel, are dust ; when the King's name is but a golden space in chronicles grey with age, these banners shall hang from Cathedral arches, and your children's children, lifted in reverent arms, shall (*going to LOUIS*) whisper an echo of our battle.

ALL. God save the Grand Constable !

(*Shouts.*)

OLIVIER (*aside to LOUIS*). They cheer him, sire.

LOUIS. My Lord Constable, and you, brave soldiers, the King of France thanks you for your gift (*taking banners*). Victory was indeed assured you by the justice of our cause. My Lord of Montcorbier, you may promise these brave fellows that their sovereign (*pause*) will remember them.

VILLON. In the King's name a gold coin to every man who fought, and a cup of wine to every man, woman, or child, who wishes to drink the King's health (*going to balustrade*).

(LOUIS calls VILLON forward. All shout.)

LOUIS. Ever generous !

VILLON. To the end, sire.

LOUIS. What have you now to do ?

VILLON (*above LOUIS. Turns and sees gallows*). My latest duty. (*Realizing his doom. Turning to the crowd.*) Soldiers who have served under me, friends who have fought with me, and you, people whom I have striven to succour ; listen to my amazing swan song (*movement from Knights*). You know me a little as Count de Montcorbier, Grand Constable of France. I know myself indifferently

well as François Villon, Master of Arts, broker of ballads, and some-while bibber and brawler. It is now my task as Grand Constable of France to declare that the life of Master François Villon is forfeit, and to pronounce on him this sentence, that he be straightway hanged upon yonder gibbet.

(A silence, then :)

ALL. What! Hanged! No. No.

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. What jest is this? *(Up to VILLON, then goes down R.)*

VILLON. Such a jest as I would rather weep over to-morrow than laugh at to-day. For the pitcher breaks at the well's mouth this very morning. Messire Noel *(comes down)*, to you I surrender my sword *(NOEL LE JOLYS takes sword and backs L. of TRISTAN.)* I like to believe that it has scraped a little shame from its master's coat. Master Tristan, perform your office upon this self-doomed felon.

(As TRISTAN L'HERMITE advances to lay hands on VILLON, angry murmurs break from the crowd. Then all shout.)

VOICES. No, no! Long live the Grand Constable! *(Cries get louder and louder.)* Pardon him, save him! Pardon—pardon!

(VILLON now up stage.)

RENÉ DE MONTIGNY. King, is this justice?

LOUIS *(rises)*. Good people of Paris, you have heard your Grand Constable pronounce sentence upon a criminal. Has Master François Villon any reason to urge, any plea to offer, why the sentence should not be carried out?

VILLON *(down R. C. and taking off gloves)*. I have nothing whatever to say, sire. François Villon is doomed, and François Villon must die. *(Murmurs of dissent. Rogues come forward.)* It's bad luck for him, but he has known worse luck, and so—to business.

(As VILLON advances towards the gallows angry murmurs break from the crowd.)

VOICES. He shall not die! Justice! Justice! Mercy! Rescue him! Save him! A rescue! A rescue!

GUY TABARIE. Kings must listen to the voice of the people. Shall the man who led us to victory die a rogue's death?

ALL. No!

(All shout. The crowd seem inclined to rush upon the KING. Slight movement from crowd. NOELLE JOLYS and Courtiers draw swords. The Scottish Archers have formed a circle round the KING. The crowd hold back uncertainly. QUEEN rises and takes the hand of the KING.)

VOICES. Hear the King! Let him pardon! Rescue! Pardon! Speak!

LOUIS. Good people of Paris. You all love this man? (*Shouts of "Yes, Ay."*) Hear then my judgment! This man's life is forfeit. (*Shouts of "Oh, no, no."*) Which of you will redeem it? (*Long pause and absolute silence.*) If there be one among you ready to take Master Villon's place on yonder gibbet, let that one speak now. Who will slip neck in noose for the sake of a hero!

(*Crowd fall back a little.*)

VILLON. No man shall die for me.

(*The QUEEN sits.*)

LOUIS. Tristan, go into yonder church and bring me a lighted candle. (*TRISTAN bows and goes into church.*) Our royal mercy is mild; our royal mercy is patient.

(*TRISTAN returns bearing a small lighted candle which is half burned down. He gives it to a soldier to hold down L.*)

LOUIS. So long as this candle burns so long François Villon lives. If while it burns one of ye is moved to take Master Villon's place on the gallows, so much the better for Master Villon, and so much the worse for his substitute. Herald, proclaim our royal pleasure. (*Sits.*)

HERALD (*advance to L.C.*). The King's grace is ready to pardon François Villon if anyone be found willing to die his death that he may live his life.

(*A great silence.*)

LOUIS (*seated, looking over balcony rail*). Master Villon, Master Villon, you see what human friendship means, and the sweet voices of the multitude.

VILLON (*down R.C.*). Sire, it is no news to me that men love the dear habit of living.

LOUIS. Once again, Herald.

(*As the Herald repeats his proclamation MOTHER VILLON comes out of the crowd at R. At first she stares in surprise at the throng; then as her ears catch the significance of the Herald's words, she looks wildly around her and sees VILLON where he stands in custody. She rushes forward.*)

MOTHER VILLON. Sire, sire, I will die for him!

(*KATHERINE appears on the steps of the church.*)

VILLON. Mother, mother, go away.

(*Tries to advance towards his mother, but is prevented by his guards.*)

MOTHER VILLON crosses and kneels to KING.)

MOTHER VILLON (*kneeling to KING*). Sire, I beseech you.

(MOTHER VILLON is drawn apart up L.C. by NOEL LE JOLYS, breaks from him and goes to VILLON.)

LOUIS. Herald, for the last time.

(The Herald proclaims again. KATHERINE stands on steps, listening.)

KATHERINE. I will.

(Surprise from crowd.)

VILLON. Katherine!

KATHERINE (going to LOUIS). I will die for him, sire.

(Slight murmurs of approval from crowd. MOTHER VILLON moves down L. of KATHERINE.)

VILLON. Katherine!

(QUEEN supplicating attitude to KING.)

LOUIS. Mistress, we speak to men.

KATHERINE (to LOUIS). Sire, I love this man, (*exclamation from crowd*) and would be proud to die for him. (*Exclamation from crowd.*) It may chime with your pleasure to slay him; it cannot chime with your honour to deny me. Your word is given, and a king must keep his word.

LOUIS. We speak to men.

VILLON (C.). I speak to a woman. Katherine, my Katherine, death is a little thing. For love is deathless, and you give me a better thing than life.

KATHERINE (L.C.). Sire, I claim your promise.

LOUIS. We speak to men. Tristan, do your office.

(Shouts of "No.")

VILLON (*breaking from Guards*). No, by God's rood, the candle of my grace has not yet burnt to the socket. (*When VILLON sees soldiers between him and KATHERINE he turns to crowd for next line.*) People of Paris, shall I not speak to my lover before I die?

(The scene is full of tumult and menace.)

LOUIS. Speak to her while the candle burns, not a second longer.

KATHERINE (*approaching VILLON*). François, will you not take life at my hands?

VILLON (*down R.C.*). Dear child, if that crowned Judas there had taken you at your word, do you think I would have outlived you by the space of a second?

KATHERINE. You are resolved? (*Crossing her to C.*)

VILLON. I am as stubborn as a mule, and no pleadings will move me.

KATHERINE. Oh, dearest, the candle flickers in the wind. There is a dagger in your girdle. Slay me and yourself.

VILLON. You mean it.

KATHERINE. By God's Mother and God's Son!

(KATHERINE on VILLON'S L.—*he draws her to his R.*)

VILLON (*as if seized by a sudden thought*). Then we will spoil old Louis's pleasure yet. Love, will you marry me here at the foot of the gallows?

KATHERINE (*arms about his neck*). With all my heart.

VILLON (*turn back again*). King, I crave your patience, but your sentence must tarry and turn, for I claim to marry this lady.

(*Murmurs from crowd.*)

LOUIS (*rising*). It is too late. Sing your neck-rhyme and have done, for your noose is too large for a wedding ring (*sitting*).

VILLON. Sire, I am a Master of Arts of the University of Paris, and as such have the right *in extremis* to any sacrament of the Church. I have lived a confirmed bachelor, but now I have a mind to change my state. Find me a priest, King Louis.

(*Murmurs of delight.*)

LOUIS. What do you hope to gain by this?

VILLON. The right to die like a soldier by the sword, not like a rogue, by the rope.

KATHERINE (*still on VILLON'S right*). Nay, you gain more than this. I am the Lady Katherine de Vaucelles, kinswoman of the royal house, mistress of a hundred lands, Grand Sènéchale of Gascony, Warden of the Marches of Poitou. In my own domains I exercise the High Justice and the Low. This man is of humble birth, and when I marry him he becomes my vassal. Over my vassals I hold the law of life and death.

(VILLON kneels. *Murmurs from crowd.*)

LOUIS. You are a bold minion and you have a quick wit. But if you marry this gaol-bird you decline to his condition. Your high titles fall from you, your great estates are forfeit to the Crown, and you and he must go out into exile together—the beggar woman with the beggar man.

VILLON. Do you think I'm worth it, Kate? 'tis a big price to pay for this poor anatomy.

KATHERINE. 'Tis a little price to pay for my lover. Do you doubt me?

VILLON (*rising*). No, Kate, no! The world is wide, our hearts are light; for a star has fallen to me from Heaven, and it fills the earth with glory.

LOUIS (*rises*). A star has fallen from Heaven. My dream, my dream. The stars have spoken. People of Paris, I have tried that man's heart and found it pure gold (*shouts from the crowd*), that woman's soul, and found it all angel. (*Coming between FRANÇOIS*

and KATHERINE.) Shepherd and shepherdess, go tend your sheep.

KATHERINE. You may carry my heart where you will.

(KING kisses QUEEN'S hand, which she extends to him. VILLON stands between KATHERINE and his MOTHER.)

VILLON. Deep in the woods I hear a shepherd sing
A simple ballad to a sylvan air,
Of love that ever finds your face more fair;
I could not give you any goodlier thing
If I were King.

(Cheers and general enthusiasm.)

FAST CURTAIN ON CHEERING.

HAND PROPERTIES

ACT I

Bow, silk arm length and parchment for Katherine
Slip of parchment for René de Montigny.
Purse for Thibaut.
Money for Louis, Tristan, Guy Tabarie and Huguetta.
Cards for Bullies on A.C. Table.
Sword on Stage.

ACT II

Roses for Katherine.
Money for Villon.
Bell on Dial.
Plucking Roses on Tree.

ACT III

Roses on Brush.
Map for Villon.

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